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Self Condemned: The Iconography of the Self

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Self Condemned: The Iconography of the Self, submitted by Ruth Mabel Salt in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Marshall McLuhan, introducing his Counterblast 1954, writes of Wyndham Lewis's novel Self Condemned:

In 1954 Wyndham Lewis blasted Toronto in the novel SELF CONDEMNED. His René (reborn) seeking his true spiritual self selects Toronto, (Momaco)... as a colonial cyclotron in which to annihilate his human ego. He succeeds.

I have introduced this study of Self Condemned with a comment on what McLuhan calls "the imbalance of thought and feeling" in the twentieth-century environment. In Chapter One I proceed to a discussion of Lewis's contention that satire is the only modality capable of properly exploring what he considered the present crisis of thought and action. Chapter Two is, with reference to certain of the works of Dostoevsky, a consideration of the roots of the contemporary imbalance. This imbalance Lewis saw as producing what he called, in The Apes of God, the "Split-Man." In the next chapters I move to an examination of René Harding, the central figure in Self Condemned, as a split man.

Chapters Three and Four deal specifically with the images and metaphors Lewis uses to create René Harding's world, and to externalize the drama of self-destruction. Chapter Five is a discussion of some of the spatial images found in the novel, as they reflect this destruction.

In the concluding chapter I suggest, following McLuhan, that the modern crisis of imbalance has led to a transformation or revolution in language which is in progress at the present time. Self Condemned is partly about the failure of logical Gutenberg man to accommodate himself to this transformation. Lewis's final image for René Harding -

that of a shell, inhabiting a "cemetery of shells" - appears ambiguous and ironic, as the shell may be both a symbol of empty space and death and a symbol of regeneration.

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The visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world is no longer a dream.

W. B. Yeats.

INTRODUCTION

THE ENVIRONMENT

At the present time a great many people are concerned with the problems of fragmentation and alienation. Fragmentation, which Marshall McLuhan sees as a "separation of functions" or "explosion,"¹ often appears to result in the state of mind called alienation, and it is about the process and the results of alienation that so many books and articles have been written. With conditions that have been pointed out time and again - of religious, political and educational chaos, rising suicide rates and a near epidemic of schizophrenia, mass fanaticism and apathy, young and old 'dropouts,' etc. - come explanations and interpretations, as each writer in turn attempts to impose some sense on what must often seem to him a drunken or lunatic landscape. But the perception brought to the problem keeps shifting too, as every new point of view changes the shape of the whole and, often, fragments it. Also, everyone seems to be speaking a different language although all are talking about the same thing, since the philosopher does not speak the language of the psychiatrist, and neither of them is usually fluent in the speech patterns employed by the political scientist. Wyndham Lewis summed up this problem succinctly when he said, speaking of modern revolution: "In such a fluid world we should by all rights be building boats rather than houses."² We are living in a transitional society, he says:

The present is of course a particularly 'transitional' society: but the transit must take some time, as it must go all round the earth. Animal conditions, practically, must prevail while this progress is occurring. We begin already to regard ourselves as animals.³

This transition appears to be a violent one for, according to T. E. Hulme, our new sensibility "radically alters our physical perception; so that the world takes on an entirely different view."⁴ Clearly, such a radical change is going to produce in many people what amounts to a psychic apocalypse with its inevitable physical manifestations of everything from public wars and riots to private comatose conditions. Marshall McLuhan, who connects this present total revolution with technology, warns his readers against the danger of panic:

Those who panic now about the threat of the newer media and about the revolution we are forging, vaster in scope than that of Gutenberg, are obviously lacking in cool visual detachment and gratitude for that most potent gift bestowed on Western man by literacy and typography: his power to act without reaction or involvement. It is this kind of specialization by dissociation that has created Western power and efficiency. Without this dissociation of action from feeling and emotion people are hampered and hesitant. Print taught men to say, "Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead!"⁵

Unfortunately, this "specialization by dissociation" has apparently produced more than "Western power and efficiency." It was a dissociation of action from feeling and emotion (although not from intellect) which impelled Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, in Crime and Punishment, to axe down the aged crone and her sister. A certain segment of the population, called "psychopathic personalities" in psychiatric language, is seemingly split from emotion, feeling and intellect. These unfortunate citizens consistently "damn the torpedos," and so perpetrate a certain amount of damage upon society, or whoever happens to be within

their range. If this dissociated and thoroughly Western man happens to be in a position of power, however, then he often appears as a political or military hero, a Hitler or a Johnson.

But there are many other sorts of people by nature more gentle and less murderous who are nevertheless caught in the rather violent waves of the "fluid world" and who are dissociated, too, in one way or another. Many of these people have lately all been grouped under the label of the alienated, and many of these alienated spend some time as patients in mental hospitals or psychiatric clinics where they are further grouped, and treated, as schizophrenics. Dr. R. D. Laing, in his book The Divided Self, begins his discussion of the twentieth-century problems of schizophrenia by complaining of a society that teaches its citizens to be split or dissociated, and then attempts to cure them of the often resulting mental illness:

In the following pages, we shall be concerned specifically with people who experience themselves as automata, as robots, as bits of machinery, or even as animals. Such persons are rightly regarded as crazy. Yet why do we not regard a theory that seeks to transmute persons into automata or animals as equally crazy?⁶

There are still left over, of course, all the other split, dissociated, fragmented and alienated persons - people who never enter a police court, or a mental hospital or attempt literally to set the world on fire. It is simple enough to write or talk in a detached manner about a detached world, but often it is not so simple for a man actually caught in the cross-currents of the flood to keep detached (or if he does, he may still have problems, as I have indicated), or to guard himself against the effects of all the buffeting about. One

of the functions of twentieth-century literature, and particularly of the novel, seems to be to give us, and perhaps posterity if it is interested, an account of what it is like, speaking person to person as it were, to live through these violent upheavals. Literature in this way serves to do something to counteract the brutalizing effects of theorizing - which effects, it seems, cannot possibly be avoided, since theory is written in logical or linear form, while there is nothing either logical or linear about the 'reality' it deals with. It seems ironic that so much of our twentieth-century thought and theory is concerned with division and fragmentation, and must begin with a split of its own, in language.

Wyndham Lewis' novel, Self Condemned, could be considered as, partly, a portrait of a modern fragmented man who has nearly developed detachment (of his own personal sort) into a ritual, and has given his life and his self over to the dictates of the intellect. It is from this point of view that I wish to approach the novel, but before examining the world of René Harding, I wish to draw attention to the modality of the genre itself. Lewis called himself a satirist and insisted that the twentieth-century artist could not be other than a satirist, given the landscape he found himself in. Therefore I wish firstly to look at Lewis's conception of satire, for the illumination it may bring both to Self Condemned and its milieu.

CHAPTER I

SATIRE AS PROBE

Since Lewis constantly argued, probed, reargued, modified and expanded his views upon the themes that concerned him, it is often very difficult to say exactly what his stand was on any one issue. Reading his books is like listening to a man engaged in dialogue, of a very energetic sort, with a great many other men; that is, no dogmatic, linear statement can be expected to emerge. This problem is compounded for the Lewis critic by the fact that any one of his concerns is inexorably woven in with all his other concerns, so that the corpus forms a great pattern, like a tapestry, to put it in visual terms. Therefore, to speak of any one issue (like satire) involves lifting it or wrenching it from its surrounding environment, and so falsifying it somewhat. But since this is a problem that presents itself whenever any critical analysis whatsoever is undertaken, I will attempt to ignore it as much as possible, and hope that the 'out of context' distortion will not damage Lewis's conceptions to the extent that they cannot be recognized at all.

Since Lewis's work is woven in this way, it does not really matter where one begins - any book or article that first comes to hand is as good a place to start as any other. But with Lewis material the odds are good that if the reader jumps into the middle of it anywhere he will at once be involved in an examination of the twentieth-century

political scene. Lewis's concern with the political might function as an apt background to his conception of satire, as well as an introduction to the milieu of Self Condemned. In one of his autobiographies, Rude Assignment, Lewis defines politics:

What are 'politics'? Let me begin by a brief and superficial enquiry. - Politics are what came into our life as soon as we departed from the purely animal condition. Man in society is an animal who is governed. Sometimes he is governed more, sometimes less. Some nations are naturally much-governed nations, just as some men are born to be hen-pecked. - No man, unless he has had a great deal of it, likes government; though he is apt to develop a dog-like devotion for his 'leader' or master.

But government is indispensable - whatever theories men may advance as to the origins of government they usually agree as to thatIts laws, in all cases, are backed by force. That is indispensable too: we accept the rule of force, which is the rule of law, and hope for the best. It is the only way we can get the libraries, laboratories, etc., etc.¹

Having made these very general comments about politics, and so given some definition to a word that is often used but seldom defined in everyday life, Lewis goes on to talk about the State:

The State (the national, sovereign, State) lives upon a far more primitive level than we do. It shows us ourselves as we ought not to be, in the process of compelling us to live as we ought to live. It seems incurably violent and morally inferior. The cause is partly to be found in Acton's often quoted observation that 'all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. The human dilemma is obvious. Government, with its unrestrained force and power, is necessary (or some force and some power is): but this necessity places us in the keeping of Caliban. It exposes us to precisely that kind of violence to secure ourselves against which we have accepted human government.²

Lewis concludes his observations upon the State with the comment:

"The State is not a subject suited to the philosophic mind. It is in the same category as horse-racing or harlotry. It is much better to turn your back upon the State, as a subject of speculation." But,

speaking of himself, Lewis says that he has kept his own speculative eye firmly upon politics and the State, unsuited as they are to that particular gaze, and he explains why he has engaged himself in this incongruous task:

In my own case, I have not followed this rule. With candor, and with an almost criminal indifference to my personal interests, I have given myself up to the study of the State. With me the first incentive to so unattractive a study was a selfish, or at least a personal one: namely a wish to find out under what kind of system learning and the arts were likely to fare best. A craft interest, that is to say. Of course later my intellectual zeal transcended this limited and specialist enquiry. I saw that human life itself was threatened, in the frenzy of our Party games and economic lunacies. - How do we not think of the State, when it shakes about under our feet, and is no longer able to hold at bay the primitive chaos, man's dread of which is its most obvious, if not its only, excuse for existing?³

At this point, and still pursuing political considerations, I will stop quoting from Rude Assignment, where Lewis has explained his personal reasons for political enquiry, and begin quoting from Men Without Art, where he is engaged in that enquiry. In Rude Assignment he has said that government is indispensable, barbaric and absolutely corrupt, and in Men Without Art, still on the same theme, but much more specifically, he says:

...for my part I am unable to imagine any human system of law and government that would not be bad. The 'impartial truth' of Science and of Art must, like Mammon, pass over into the new dispensation, however - and that as intact as possible, if we are to be civilized at all....I see upon all sides the standards in the arts of which I am a practitioner getting worse and worse - the gang-mind taking the place of the individual mind, and the books and pictures not improving in the process. The business-mind more and more imposes its box-office and library-subscription standards upon the productions of the intellect - that requires no pointing out. For a century this deterioration has been under way, however.⁴

It appears, then, that Lewis started with the assumption that politics are an inexorable part of all human life above the purely animal, and with the naive, but perfectly understandable "wish to find out under what kind of system learning and the arts were likely to fare best." But he comes very quickly, from this point, to the position where he is "unable to imagine any human system of law and government that would not be bad." Today, he says, a royalist's king cannot "be anything but a dangerous and mercenary puppet," and he concedes to Marxism that although it is lauded as "the terrorist absolutism of a Ghenghiz Khan...it cannot be much worse than the feudal and post-feudal monarchies of Europe."⁵ And so it goes, with system after dreary and bloody system, as a reading of Lewis's books shows. Placed in this kind of landscape, as one is at this juncture, it comes as no shock to hear Lewis declare that:

Human life had better, here and now, and once and for all, be accepted as a very bad business indeed. And such people as you (and by you I mean You) must not waste our time in predilections or beliefs of an illusory nature, pitting this system against that. All are apt to be equally bad....We must...understand that there is no such thing as a just, humane, and enlightened régime "just around the corner" either, or anywhere in the universe at all.⁶

If one now moves into the field of art and satire supposing, or convinced, that it is both stupid and futile "to pit this system against that," then satire at once becomes a very different matter from what it is generally thought to be. That is, no longer can it be thought of as having a moral purpose with an end to improving mankind in however slight a fashion. For that moral that the satirist thumped for would be

a moral or an ethic according to some political or governing system or other. The satirist would be, in fact, pitting his system (which he would suppose would produce a better world) against those systems he is attacking. He would be wasting time. In a chapter entitled "The Greatest Satire is Non-Moral" in Men Without Art, Lewis parts company with the moralist who, Lewis says, "regards satire as belonging pre-eminently to his domain":

I am a satirist, I am afraid there is no use denying that. But I am not a moralist: and about that I make no bones either. And it is these two facts, taken together, which constitute my particular difficulty. It is contended, against the satirist, that since man is not autonomous -- and who but will agree to that I hope? -- he cannot arm himself with laughter and invective, and sally forth to satirical attacks upon his neighbour, without first acquiring the moral sanction of the community -- with whose standards and canons of conduct he must be at one -- and first advertising himself as a champion of some outraged Mrs. Grundy.⁷

Lewis maintains that it is a prejudice to see in satire a work of edification, put forth primarily for the good of our moral sensibilities, and further suggests that the greatest satire is outside the field of morality altogether:

It could perhaps be asserted, even, that the greatest satire cannot be moralistic at all; if for no other reason, because no mind of the first order, expressing itself in art, has ever itself been taken in, nor consented to take in others, by the crude injunctions of any purely moral code. This does not mean that the mind in question was wanting in that consciousness of itself as a rational subject, which is never absent in an intellect of such an order; but that its abstract theory, as well as its concrete practice, of moral judgements, would differ from the common run, and that their introduction would merely confuse the issue.⁸

Having asserted that the greatest satire is non-moral, that is, independent of the usual moral considerations, Lewis then turns to his reader, and, anticipating his questions, says, "But how can satire stand

without the moral sanction? you may ask." Most people assume, he says, that "satire can only exist in contrast to something else - it is a shadow, and an ugly shadow at that, of some perfection."

Lewis proceeds to answer this objection by saying:

...it is my belief that 'satire' for its own sake - as much as anything else for its own sake - is possible: and that even the most virtuous and well-proportioned of men is only a shadow, after all, of some perfection; a shadow of an imperfect, and hence an 'ugly,' sort. And as to laughter, if you allow it in one place you must, I think, allow it in another. Laughter - humour and wit - has a function in relation to our tender consciousness; a function similar to that of art. It is the preserver much more than the destroyer. And, in a sense, everyone should be laughed at or else no one should be laughed at. It seems that ultimately that is the alternative.⁹

Lewis here is arguing for satire, and its particular laughter, as the preserver of life. Since life is so depressingly imperfect, and not capable of much improvement, either by "pitting this system against that," or by any other means either, and since there is always such a radical and tragic split "Between the idea/And the reality"¹⁰ - to borrow an apt phrase from T. S. Eliot's The Hollow Men - then it seems that the business of life could not be faced at all without some release from too much reality. In The Art of Being Ruled Lewis makes a point in speaking about tragedy which might be relevant here:

When the tragic artist takes life in hand for representation, secondary characteristics disappear as he manipulates it. It is at life itself, rather than at our particular social life of the moment, that his terrible processes are directed. His 'truth,' if it were not deadened by a rhythmical enchantment, would annihilate us.¹¹

Much great satire, it could be argued, deals with "life itself" as well as with the "particular social life of the moment," and the truth it presents often seems no less threatening than the truth of the

tragedian. To the "rhythmical enchantment" of tragedy, acting as a protective device, could be added the protection of laughter. The creatures given us by Jonathan Swift in Gulliver's Travels, or the nightmare etchings of Goya, or the pin-headed giantesses sculpted by Henry Moore are very painful to contemplate - in fact they might well prove too painful and addle the mind altogether, were it not that they are enormously comic, as well as horrible. Perhaps laughter could well be considered one of the elements of catharsis.

But there is another aspect to the protective function of laughter. It not only preserves "our tender consciousness," but our active and bodily life as well. The human types (or roles perhaps) of clown, king, clerk or student, need to be preserved, or else soon the crushing vision of what we are would mean that there was nothing we could be at all.

Lewis takes some trouble to explain just what satiric laughter is. In regards to this it would be useful to quote a rather long passage from Men Without Art:

Perfect laughter, if there could be such a thing, would be inhuman. And it would select as the objects of its mirth as much the antics dependent upon pathologic maladjustments, injury, or disease, as the antics of clumsy and imperfectly functioning healthy people. At this point it is perhaps desirable to note that in general human beings display no delicacy about spiritual or mental shortcomings in their neighbours, but only physical. To be a fool with a robust body can be no more pleasant for the person in question than being an intelligent dwarf: yet no one scruples to laugh at the former, but parades a genteel sensitiveness regarding the latter. Infinitely more pain is inflicted by laughter provoked by some non-physical cause than by that provoked by the physical. So do not let us take too much for granted that we can put our finger blindfold upon the supreme 'cad.'

Our deepest laughter is not, however, inhuman laughter. And yet it is non-personal and non-moral. And it enters fields which are commonly regarded as the preserve of more 'serious' forms of reaction. There is no reason at all why we should not burst out laughing at a foetus, for instance. We should after all only be laughing at ourselves! - at ourselves early in our mortal career.¹²

Satiric laughter, says Lewis, is not like the laughter aroused by the genteel humorist. Since the satire Lewis is speaking of has its roots in the metaphysical, or in the conditions of life itself, it will naturally have some affinity with tragedy:

He who wants a jolly, carefree, bubbling, world chock-full of 'charm,' must not address himself to the satirist! The wind that blows through satire is as bitter as that that predominates in the pages of Timon or King Lear. Indeed, the former is a satire. And Hamlet, for instance, is very much that too - a central satire - developing now into comedy, now into tragedy.¹³

Having now pointed to one or two of the attributes and functions of satire, it would be well to define satire, as Lewis saw it. Satire, he says, is nothing more or less than the "truth" - the truth, that is, of natural science. Or, to put it another way, the truth of the intellect. It would be ridiculous to maintain, Lewis points out, that satiric truth or scientific truth is the only truth, but it would be equally ridiculous to say that the truth of Romance is the only truth. Lewis has a great deal to say about Romance, which he, like T. E. Hulme, associates with humanist values. Those values, he says, "are starkly opposed to all the plastic and pictorial values in the ascendant today...."¹⁴ In a comment about the sculptor Rodin, Lewis shows what sort of art the humanist values eventually lead to:

If you have ever seen and can recall the sculpture of Auguste Rodin - those flowing, structureless, lissom, wave-lined pieces of

commercial marble - you will then have the best possible illustration of the in-this-sense humanist, the naturalist technique. They are Bergson's élan vitale translated into marble: the whole philosophy of the Flux is palpitating and streaming in those carefully selected and cleverly dreamified stone-photographs of naked nature.¹⁵

But satire, which is not of Romance, and which does not campaign for humanist values, is quite a different matter. The truth of the intellect, or the eye of natural science, does not produce much élan vitale. Lewis expounds on what satire is:

There is nothing of the hot innards of Freud-infected art - no "Fantasies of the Unconscious" about Satire, that you must allow. No, it is all constructed out of the dry shells and pelts of things. The surface of the visible machinery of life alone is used.... - the bustling manners of the satiric art do not lend themselves to swamp-effects, and to the smudgings of the aura-lined spirit-pictures. All is metallic - all is external.¹⁶

Satire, then, is more than an artistic genre rising out of a particular attitude toward life, and the times - it is a technique, as well. It is associated with what Lewis calls "The External Approach." This approach puts the emphasis on the outside of things, says Lewis, on the skins and pelts, or shells, or ossatures, rather than on the inside of things. Lewis illustrates this point by saying of D. H. Lawrence: "My objections to Mr. D. H. Lawrence were chiefly concerned with that regrettable habit of his incessantly to refer to the intestinal billowing of 'dark' subterranean passion. In his devotion to that romantic abdominal Within he abandoned the sunlit pagan surface of the earth."¹⁷ The external approach, Lewis suggests, may be examined in literature in his own novel The Apes of God. No book has ever been written, he maintains, that has paid more attention to the outside of

people - "In it their shells and pelts, or the language of their bodily movements, come first, not last."¹⁸ Lewis sums up the relation of satire to the external rather succinctly when he says:

Satire is cold, and that is good! It is easier to achieve those polished and resistant surfaces of a great externalist art in Satire. At least they are achieved more naturally than can be done beneath the troubled impulse of the lyrical afflatus. All the nineteenth century poetry of France, for instance, from the Fleurs du Mal onwards, was stiffened with Satire, too. There is a stiffening of Satire in everything good, of 'the grotesque,' which is the same thing - the non-human outlook must be there (beneath the fluff and pulp which is all that is seen by the majority) to correct our soft conceit. This cannot be gainsaid. Satire is good.¹⁹

So, in a sense, the two matters relating to satire - of attitude or orientation, and of the external approach, which is a technical question - are really one consideration. That is to say, they imply one another. It could perhaps be maintained that, generally, the artist who disentangles himself from humanist values and ranges himself upon the side of the intellect and the external will automatically become a satirist: he need not even necessarily be aware that this is what, in fact, he is, or he need not verbally apply the label satirist to himself.

Lewis is also concerned with the role of satire in twentieth-century art. He states quite flatly that all art of our age is, and will be, satiric. In Men Without Art Lewis makes the depressing statement that "Art will die, perhaps. It can, however, before doing so, paint us a picture of what life looks like without art. That will be, of course, a satiric picture. Indeed, it is one."²⁰

As the title Men Without Art indicates, the book is concerned with the possibility of the death of art. Lewis envisioned a world without

art, a world so brutalized and so sunk (again) into the animal as to be not worth living in. He comes back to this nightmarish theme again and again: in The Art of Being Ruled he attempts to outline a possible defence that young twentieth-century artists might adopt in their situation, but in The Demon of Progress in the Arts he writes a "Postscript" which is nothing more or less than an echo of W. B. Yeats' well known "After us the Savage Gods." Lewis begins by talking of the deterioration of our material goods, our housing, clothing and food, and concludes his book by saying:

Well. Unless human beings are going to experience the same deterioration in the very tissues of which their bodies are composed, unless their skins are to lose their resilience, their warmth, and all the other qualities which make them so high class a covering for a man to have; unless nature is to begin to take less trouble over our nails, our hair (that may disappear altogether), our wonderful shining eyes, which may become dull and myopic, so that spectacles must be provided for all from the cradle onwards - unless all this is to come about there will have to be some great revolution. That is why talking about the alarming outlook for the fine arts appears so trivial a matter when one has finished writing about it. It is infected with the triviality of everything else.²¹

This vision alone is perhaps the most persuasive testament to and argument for satire in the sense that Lewis outlines it, with its overtones of both a consciousness of and a certain freedom from (through laughter, and the grotesque) our particular situation. This often quoted passage from Blasting and Bombadiering perhaps serves to capture the whole mood of Lewis's contentions about satire:

I would not have you think that I am shut out from the sense of what is called by the Japanese 'the Ah-ness of things': the melancholy inherent in the animal life. But there is a Ho-ho-ness too. And against the background of their sempiternal Ah-ness it is possible, strictly in the foreground, to proceed with a protracted comedy, which glitters against the darkness.²²

In Lewis's work, as with the work of so many other writers, the "protracted comedy," although always present, seems to have a tendency to crack from time to time, allowing the background to infiltrate too much into the foreground. But, finally, it was the foreground that Lewis preferred when he said, in Men Without Art:

All these things hang together - it is the end of history, and the beginning of historical pageant and play. But we are compelled, to some extent, to enter into the spirit of the comedy - that is the humble message of this book.²³

CHAPTER II

DROPOUTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT:

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SPACE

If, as Lewis maintains, "politics are what came into our life as soon as we departed from the purely animal condition," then it appears that a man's political life and sensibilities are much more extensive than they are usually thought to be. If at the age of three, or five, or six, the human being has left behind him his purely animal state, that is, has begun to exhibit what is called civilized behaviour and responses, or to display some reasoning ability, then a child of that age would already be a political animal. His ways of acting and ways of seeing the world would already have begun to be shaped according to some system or other, and by the time he reached adulthood the influence of the system would be well established, although greatly increased in complexity. Simply, politics do not form a separate compartment to a person's life, distinct from his personal life or his social life, career or religion. Some bias, developed into a workable system, appears to govern all those areas; so, in this way, the man is governed. Lewis was constantly concerned with the pervasive quality of politics, and when he turns his eye to the effect of obvious governmental politics upon human life, he takes the whole range of human endeavour and space for his study. The Art of Being Ruled is largely concerned with political systems of the twentieth-century as they affect 'everyman' in

all the areas of his life, as well as with an examination of the influences and effects of politics upon the intellectual endeavours: art, philosophy, and science. Politics are no more pervasive than Lewis's interest in them: The Lion and the Fox is, he says, "all about Shakespeare's politics,"¹ and The Doom of Youth opens with a declaration that "all politics to-day are, in one degree or another, 'Youth politics.'"² These are just two examples, showing the range of Lewis's interest, from the high-mark of English letters to the human cradle, as it were.

But Lewis was not the first thinker to look closely, and finally askance, at the landscapes of political systems, or eventually to find himself outside it all, "unable to imagine any system of law and government that would not be bad," or unable, in all conscience, "to pit this system against that." To go no further into the past than the nineteenth century, the Russian novelist Dostoevsky found himself struggling with the very same problems, engaged in what Lewis called "the unrelievedly gloomy epic of spiritual freedom."³ For Dostoevsky the theme of the man outside began with his first works, including Notes from the Underground, and continued to The Brothers Karamazov, his last novel. In a broadcast talk for the BBC "Crisis" series, Lewis recalls the influence that the Russian novelists, including Dostoevsky, exerted upon his own development:

Asked to describe what influences were decisive in my life as a writer...I was at first at a loss to know what to say....So I went on a search, backwards into my young life, keeping my eyes open for the intellectual coup de foudre. For guidance I divided my activity into

the creative and the critical: and since - as I believe I have already remarked - the critical with me grew out of the creative, it must be to the source of the latter that I must give especial attention. - And at last, stepping warily as I moved about in the misty youthful scene (everything before world war i has become almost an alien land) I came up against a solid mass of books - not one book, as I had thought I might - which supplied the answer. This was something that revolutionised my technique of approach to experience - that did not merely give me a great kick at the moment and then quickly fade, as most things do. -- The mass of books to which I have referred is the creative literature of Russia. And when I took down some of these half-forgotten volumes - went again with Pierre in his incongruous white hat and green coat on to the field of Borodino, and with Raskolnikov lifted the axe to strike down the aged usurer - I very nearly had another crisis, hardened as I am now to such influences.⁴

"The critical with me grew out of the creative," Lewis comments of his work, and when he comes to the point in his critical thought where he suggests that all human life and systems governing human life had better be accepted as "a very bad business," he is presenting a twentieth-century echo of Dostoevsky. The unhappy narrator of Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground reasons that for a man to be a man in the world he must be something, if he is nothing then there is no place for him. But in his own case, he says, he is unable to become anything - "It was not only that I could not become spiteful, I did not know how to become anything: neither spiteful nor kind, neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect."⁵ And since he cannot be anything, there is no place for him either; "...I am living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously, and it is only the fool who becomes anything."⁶ Since it is "only the fool who becomes anything," since, that is, he has rejected all systems that men

usually live by, and their ensuing roles, he is forced into a corner -- all other spaces he has refused or rejected as stupid or, as modern jargon would have it, phoney. And when this outsider, who feels that the world is unreal and he cannot even become "an insect" (he is in a worse position, from one point of view, than the hero of Kafka's Metamorphosis who at least could become something, even if it was an insect), turns his eyes to the world that he has left behind, he finds little to encourage him. Like René Harding of Self-Condemed, who comes after him, he muses about history:

...one may say anything about the history of the world - anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat. And, indeed, this is the odd thing that is continually happening: there are continually turning up in life moral and rational persons, sages and lovers of humanity who make it their object to live all their lives as morally and rationally as possible, to be, so to speak, a light to their neighbors simply in order to show them that it is possible to live morally and rationally in this world. And yet we all know that those very people sooner or later have been false to themselves, playing some queer trick, often a most unseemly one. Now I ask you: what can be expected of man since he is a being endowed with such strange qualities? Shower upon him every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes, and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then, out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would deliberately desire the most fatal rubbish, the most uneconomic absurdity, simply to introduce into all this positive good sense his pernicious fantastic element.⁷

What Dostoevsky wrote in the nineteenth century and Lewis wrote a century later appear to be variations upon a theme. "One may say anything at all about the history of the world," announces Dostoevsky's underground man, "the only thing one can't say is that it's rational."

From this it follows that history is irrational or absurd (as Rene Harding finds it) and so of course it is a waste of time "to pit this system against that" since "all are apt to be equally bad."

But Dostoevsky did not leave this concern when he had finished writing Notes from the Underground: the figure of the man who rejects all systems as irrational and absurd and so argues himself into a corner of one sort or another, is to be found throughout Dostoevsky's work. By the time he writes The Brothers Karamazov it appears that he is much more profoundly concerned about the problems of systems of action and thought than he was when writing Notes from the Underground, since he has taken this line of exploration to its logical conclusion. The mental earthquakes suffered by Ivan Karamazov are upon a grander scale than the complainings of the ex-clerk who cannot become anything, and does not want to. It is not only that Ivan cannot accept human and historical systems: his rejection reaches a cosmic level as well. In a meeting with his brother Alyosha he explains why he cannot accept the system of God, let alone the systems of men:

What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? And what becomes of harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price. I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love of humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left

with the unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, even if I were wrong. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket.⁸

Although Ivan cries to his brother, "I don't want more suffering," his own fate is, ultimately, insanity. By the end of the novel he suffers a great deal from an hallucinatory devil who ceaselessly mocks him with his own words, his own ideas, and his own questionings, only in ugly caricature. There appears to be a similarity between the fate of Ivan Karamazov and of René Harding; although René's fate is also a caricature in that René seems but a shadow of Ivan. The devil who caricatures Ivan is itself caricatured in Self Condemned when René is flung about by what the reader knows only as a supernatural force. It is as if, by our time, the pale devils of the nineteenth century have become even paler, now not even taking a shape.

It might be said that Ivan Karamazov condemned himself when he quite consciously chose to wrestle intellectually with the mysteries of existence. In this way he is a descendant of the earlier man of the underground, who is imprisoned in his corner by his own choice, and quite realizes it:

I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness - a real thorough-going illness. For man's everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most abstract and premeditated town on the whole terrestrial globe....It would have been quite enough, for instance, to have the consciousness by which all so-called direct persons and men of action live.⁹

Similarly, Raskolnikov, of Crime and Punishment, condemns himself to murder by rationally concluding that in a Godless universe there can be no crime, and Kirillov, in The Possessed, condemns himself to suicide with the insight that self-destruction is the only possible free act for a man of the times. All the anguished self-condemnations that Dostoevsky presents appear as precursors to the twentieth-century unrest which led Camus to observe: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."¹⁰ A person may commit suicide in an amazing variety of ingenious ways, and the insanity of Ivan Karamazov, the gutting of the mind of René Harding, the underground existence of the disgruntled narrator, or the murder committed by Raskolnikov all seem just as clearly suicides as any act which will make a man a physical corpse.

The suicidal figures from the pages of Dostoevsky's novels have all come to self-annihilation by way of, or by the use of, the intellect. They are none of them "morons"¹¹ as Camus's figure Meursault, in The Stranger, later turns out to be: they are not, at least not ostensibly, involved in a rejection of the world or of society because they are stupid, but quite the contrary. Characters such as Ivan Karamazov, Raskolnikov, or Kirillov have thought it all out very carefully, in fact they have displayed a frenzied intensity of thought before reaching the point where they reject the usual systems of thought and action. Nor are they dull-witted to begin with, so that the exercises of their intelligence, however frenzied, would

never have amounted to much under any circumstances. Dostoevsky appears always very careful to give his intellectual suicides such first rate minds as would be displayed by men who were quite out of the ordinary. Ivan Karamazov, and Stavrogin¹² of The Possessed, may be the best examples of this. But with Dostoevsky's characters that violent denial of what most persons accept as the simple unquestioned conditions of life, or the life of the times, has the effect of involving them in self-destruction of one form or another, as I have suggested. Simply, their condemnation of systems, or ways of looking and acting that are quite cheerfully and unconsciously embraced by their contemporaries, amounts to self-condemnation. By placing themselves outside the world they were born into they have no place to go except to some corner or other, either to rot in spite, or to give themselves over to lunacy.

In Paleface, Lewis speaks of the death that a race of people will suffer if they are deprived of their own individual culture, or as he puts it, "way of consciousness." The individual deaths or suicides which I have cited from literature seem to be analogous to the death of tribes or races that Lewis is concerned with in Paleface:

The neighbours of the Chukchee, deprived of their freedom and of the natural expansions of their deep-rooted 'way of consciousness,' or soul, sink back into their arctic torpor, languish, and die. In my book The Art of Being Ruled, I suggested that it was not only geographically unimportant races, like these sub-arctic tribes, that were prone to these collapses if suddenly interfered with, or defeated, to such an extent that the deepest 'consciousness' or soul is impaired. Also great nations or races, I contended, may similarly suffer, and sink into a discouraged torpor, just as much as may a small tribe. And in that book I suggested that there were many symptoms in post-war Europe of such a collapse. I cited the wide-spread phenomenon of male-inversion as an example of the form that this collapse was taking. As the starch went out of them, the males relapsed into what in Sodom are technically called 'bitches,' in a process of almost physiological transformation.¹³

The starch may go out of a person, it would appear, as much intellectually as sexually - although often the two go together - as that person is deprived of his "deep-rooted 'way of consciousness,' or soul": this, perhaps, is one of the sides to the story of Ivan Karamazov's tragedy, however much he is also self-condemned. It is not simply that he has condemned himself, but it is also that his self, or being, or soul, has been condemned, by forces outside his control. It is not simply the intellect, then, that has brought the intellectual to such an unhappy pass. The fault is to be found partly in the hostile and alien environment he inhabits, which might drive him into a torpor where he will languish and die, as happens to Stavrogin in The Possessed, or, in another way, to René Harding. Or, again, if he is of an excitable nature, he may suffer a noisy nervous collapse or go out in a puff of bullet smoke: all these types are to be found in the literature of the past century. As has been indicated, it is often (although not always, by any means) the intellectual, or very sensitive person - often of an artistic disposition - who may be subject to these traumas, as if, speaking metaphorically, it is the most sensitive and highly developed plant in the forest or green house that is most easily affected by adverse conditions. In Men Without Art, Lewis speaks of the effect of the twentieth-century environment upon artistic endeavour:

...the rapid changes in our cities, and in a lesser degree in our countryside, whether they are 'Americanizing' us or not, are at least depriving us of the secular upholstery of our continent. And the more and more disembodied character of our art is no doubt in response to this external impoverishment. Just as I think a very obstinate American could make something of the 'American Scene' (even without passing over into a

demented expressionism, as a desperate way out of the difficulty) so I think the intensification of the European Waste, physical and spiritual, does not preclude the possibility of artistic expression. But what I do say is that as progressively the Europeans, like a vast flock of sheep, allow their hereditary property to be pillaged, and find themselves more and more drifting into a sort of 'Barrens' - and as their artists lose contact with nature, driven into the subterranean caverns of their memory and inherited imagination, that the products of the intellect will grow thinner and more shadowy, the very eyesight itself will become impaired - at the best an affair of abstract notation rather than of physical gusto. But what am I saying! Has not this physical gusto already vanished?¹⁴

Although for a hundred years or more we have experienced a rather loud and sustained wave of anti-intellectualism, inspired in part, no doubt, by the unaccommodated life offered to the intellectual at this time in our history and resulting in neuroses of various sorts among men who are inclined by nature to work with their heads, Lewis fought for the supremacy of the intellect during the whole of his career. In Paleface, he says, "I would rather have the least man that thinks, than the average man that squats and drums and drums, with 'sightless,' 'soulless' eyes: I would rather have an ounce of human 'consciousness' than a universe full of 'abdominal' afflatus and hot, unconscious, 'soulless,' mystical throbbing,"¹⁵ and in The Art of Being Ruled he comments:

That when I am speaking of the intellectual I evidently experience no shame (reflecting on the compromising nature of my own occupation), that I do not pretend to be 'a plain, blunt man,' is true.

Far from that, it is my effrontery to claim that men owe everything they can ever hope to have to an 'intellectual' of one sort or another. And that is true of the business magnate and his meanest employee. I claim further that the intellectual is the only person in the world who is not a potential 'capitalist,' because his 'capital' is something that cannot be bartered. What he deals in, even when it gives him power, gives him no money.

.....

The life of the intelligence is the very incarnation of freedom: where it is dogmatic and harsh it is impure; where it is too political

it is impure: its disciplines are less arbitrary and less political than those of religion; and it is the most inveterate enemy of unjust despotic power. In its operation it is less violent and more beneficent than religion, with its customary intolerance of emotional extremes. It does not exercise power by terror or romantic pictures of the vast machinery of Judgment and Destruction. It is more humane than are the programmes of the theological justiciary. And its servants are not a sect nor an organized caste, like the priest or the hereditary aristocrat, but individuals possessing no concerted and lawless power, coming indifferently from all classes, and living simply among other people. And their pride, if they have it, is because of something inside themselves which has been won at no one else's expense, and that no one can give them or remove from them.¹⁶

The intellect then, or the life led by the person who is of an intellectual nature, may lead to miserable situations, according to what can be gathered from intellectuals, like Dostoevsky, who have made it their business to be well acquainted with the situation in our time. Furthermore, as Lewis points out, the twentieth-century environment, both physical and spiritual, presents itself as an enemy to both intellectual and artistic endeavour. But, for all that, the human intellect is all we have between ourselves and that primordial slime or purely animal existence from which we supposedly came - and came via the intellect, which for centuries has been busily constructing shells and ossatures to stand between us and naked nature. But when Lewis puts his belief in the intellect up against what that same intellect shows him, he is confronted with the problems that Dostoevsky faced, or so a reading of Self-Condemed indicates. The nineteenth century problems have become our problems, only in a different language and context.

CHAPTER III

THE POLAR BEAR: RETREAT

INTO FUNCTIONAL MADNESS

I

In his poem The Hollow Men, T. S. Eliot has these lines:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long¹

And in The Lion and the Fox, Lewis quotes the following lines from Bradley to use as the central idea in his chapter on "The World of Action and the World of Tragedy":

"The tragic world is a world of action, and action is the translation of thought into reality. We see men and women confidently attempting it. They strike into the existing order of things in pursuance of their ideas. But what they achieve is not wholly what they intended; it is terribly unlike it. They understand nothing, we say to ourselves, of the world on which they operate. They fight blindly in the dark, and the power that works through them makes them the instrument of a design which is not theirs."²

There is a "shadow," says Eliot, "between the idea and the reality," or "between the conception and the creation." This "shadow," Bradley would maintain, lurks about in the world of tragedy: it is the

discontinuity between a man's thoughts and the translation of that thought into reality or action - the tragic discontinuity. But that shadow belongs as much to the world of the absurd as it does to the world of tragedy; it is, in effect, an absurd shadow, trafficking as it does in discontinuity, disharmony, or irrationality. This absurd shadow appears a democrat, invading every area, or level, or space of life: a remarkable discontinuity, for example, has been observed over the last centuries between the Christian ideal or idea and the actual history of Christianity, and in our own time there has developed a marked shadow between the theory or idea of socialism and its actuality. These are just two examples; no doubt many more could be cited by looking into virtually every area of human concern - the religious, the political, the philosophic, the scientific, the artistic, or the domestic.

It seems quite likely that the shadow of absurdity functions just as much in the world of learning, thought, and letters as it does anywhere else: that is, that there is as much split between idea and reality in that world as in any world. It might be conjectured, if these matters were visualized in ladder imagery, that conversation is the 'lowest' (or most unsatisfactory) civilized means of contact with reality, or exploration of reality, with the essay form following closely behind conversation, and art on top of them all, it giving us the clearest vision of reality. But life is the realest of them all, it could be said - if we could get at it except through some conversational or artistic form, which, apparently, we cannot. The absurdity of this situation perhaps hovers about a great deal of our art. In Lewis's work, his ideas and

conceptions are embodied in his critical or polemical material; the 'testing' or putting back into life of those ideas comes when he gives them to a fictional character in one of his novels. In this way, it seems, a writer is able to imagine the fate or consequences of any given idea, or conception or world-view. Those ideas, once embodied in flesh (even if just imaginative flesh) at once become something else, something other than they were when disembodied as pure thought, as well as gaining considerably in complexity. This difference - an absurd difference - between the idea and the reality, or between the critical and the creative, would, no doubt, appeal enormously to the satirist, who, according to Lewis, relishes his material. Of the writer's attitude to satire Lewis says:

No one can be expected to love Satire exactly, at least no layman. For the technician it is otherwise: all writers worth their salt value the beloved "Ben" as much as Herrick did, and would sell their shirt to be with him for a half-hour at the Sun, the Dog, the Tunne; and Gustave Flaubert attracts all penmen's ink-stained hearts - all who are authentic hommes-plumes as he called it, that is to say - and of course in spite of the fact that this outrageous Norman spent his days in word-sculpture of the besotted Bourgeois Man (lower than Neanderthal man by far - an ape almost it seems) out of the very stuff and texture of mud, and of gutter-mud at that!3

So, it seems, the satirist relishes just as much his self-satire; his own ideas and his own tools, which are, like everything else, "only a shadow of some perfection," and so must seem, at times, "the very stuff and texture of mud."

René Harding, the hero of Self Condemned, gives utterance to certain ideas which sound very much like what Lewis says in many of his critical writings, and he embodies or acts out certain other ideas and

attitudes. But René Harding is also himself - that is, René Harding, a man of a particular temperament and situation - and, as well, he is a child or puppet of his age. But those "Lewisian" ideas that he sports with, or that sport with him, are at first perhaps almost unrecognizable, since their environment has changed so drastically. They have gone from idea to reality - or at least to the reality of fiction.

René Harding has a life of his own - which we as readers know about - a life which very much complicates any ideas or theories he may have. His life and his theories modify, play upon and shape each other; they are not separate entities. Just as René has not complete control over the productions of his intellect - for, aside from the fact that his ideas will change as soon as they are released to the public, they change, too, according to the circumstances of his life: if his situation is tolerable his work will improve, if intolerable, it suffers - so his life is not his own either, strictly speaking. At the beginning of the novel René resigns his chair as Professor of History because he feels that he may not teach what he likes in the way he feels is necessary. The resignation changes the whole of his life. It is an example of the intellectual side of a man influencing all of his world, and the world of those who are close to him. But René moves from his home in England to Canada partly to avoid the second war in Europe: the war is outside his range of control, and that move, as well as his decision to leave his post, changes his life

drastically. On the other hand, the happenings of his life profoundly affect his intellectual endeavour: the book he writes after his emotionally and mentally gruelling experiences in Canada is not so fine as the work he had done in England, and the suicide of his wife stops all intellectual endeavour whatsoever. The point is that the novel tremendously complicates any theory or idea, showing as it does that thought, as well as everyday life, is often at the mercy of the times, and circumstances, and a man's own particular and curious makeup. From this point of view Self-Condemned is a close and specific exploration of Hulme's contention that "the amount of freedom in man is much exaggerated."⁴ But it is also an exploration of the shadow, the radical split between ideas and reality, and, as such, is involved in both the satiric and the tragic.

Before proceeding to an examination of the text of Self-Condemned, a word of explanation as to procedure is perhaps in order. I wish to concentrate almost solely on the figure of René Harding, for two reasons. In the first place, René is an example of the twentieth-century (intellectual) man outside, and so seems to follow the tradition of the Ivan Karamazov, Raskolnikov figures of Dostoevsky. Secondly, the form of the novel itself appears almost to compel a concentration upon the main figure. Although Self-Condemned is not a 'first person' novel - that is, René does not tell his own story in the 'I' sense - the tone and mood is that of a first person novel. No action in the novel takes place without René's presence: if some action necessary to the telling of the story occurs during his absense then that incident is reported,

rather than dramatized, although the reporting often has a highly dramatic element. Speaking in this way of the mood set by the novel, only conjecture and feeling upon the part of the reader are possible as evidence of anything -- and it appears, in this vein, that one of the things the novel is about is René looking at René. That is, it feels often that this is a novel by René about René -- abstracted as he tends to be, with the narrator's distance between himself and himself, but knowing nothing of anything except what happens to him. If this is the case, then the form that Lewis gave the novel greatly emphasizes the character of René Harding, who has split his animal or 'everyday life' self from his intellectual self, who prides himself upon his powers of abstraction, whose concentration upon specific aspects of the world has made him fatally blind to others, and who is not only very interested in being conscious, but is also very conscious of his consciousness.

II

As author, thinker, and Professor of History, René Harding is a man who lives by his mind; in short, he is an intellectual. As such, he is interested in the question of consciousness:

The problems of consciousness had often preoccupied René: he thought of it as enlightenment, as a light unaccountably breaking in upon a darkness, and the mind born with this light modifying the creatures affected by it. In other words, men. He estimated that we were perhaps rather more than half-way across that, in geological terms, infinitely brief era of 'enlightenment.' Men, he felt, were less enlightened than they had been. -- Slowly men awakened from the sleep of nature, or recovered from the madness of nature, as Rene

preferred to say. Man had begun to look around him, once the dazzling light had been thrown upon his surroundings; and he saw where he was, though why he was there he could not imagine. Finally he discovered he was riding an immense ball - dashing around in a cold, black emptiness - which was warmed by a much larger, extremely hot ball. All this was a great deal more than the polar bear or the monkey knew.

The polar bear was mad, he was obsessed with being a polar bear; and many men were pretty mad also, incapable of looking at themselves from the outside. No one could imagine why man had abstracted himself and acquired the sanity of consciousness; why he had gone sane in the midst of a madhouse of functional character. - And History: with that, René's central tragedy was reached. History, such as is worth recording, is about the passion of men to stop sane. Most History so-called is the bloody catalogue of their back-slidings. Such was René's unalterable position.⁵

The problem of consciousness is for René a problem of the utmost importance, not simply to himself, but to the whole of mankind as well: the fate of the world depends upon it. Mankind's "backslidings," which in this century have catapulted us into two world wars and left us tottering on the brink of a third and even more terrible one, can be countered (if at all) only by a greater and greater "passion to stop sane." Oriented as he is in this not unusual way, René is not only preoccupied by the problems of consciousness, he is also concerned with all the problems of human life that his consciousness is capable of bringing to light, or to his attention. And René has his own language or tool for working with those problems: that of the Historian, although his work in History has led him to a position his friend Rotter (Robert Parkinson) has labeled "anti-History."⁶ René ultimately concludes that "most History so-called is irrational, absurd and bloody, a catalogue of their back-slidings": in other words, the history of a biped polar bear. Explaining to his sister Helen the disillusionment he has suffered with regard to

traditional History, Rene says, "Through looking too hard at the material I was working on, I saw the maggots in it, I saw the rottenness, the fatal flaws; had to stop earning my living in that way."⁷

But René has not simply rejected the traditional orientation to history; he has developed ideas about a new orientation, which he has embodied in a book, The Secret History of World War II. What René wants is a rational approach to history, with the emphasis upon the rational and sane people and events of history, instead of upon the irrational and insane ones. It seems logical (and rational) to René that history should be regarded in his new way, and he reaches his conclusions by stopping sane himself or by looking at the world from the outside. In an article he has written about René's book, Rotter comments on the split between life and thought when he says "...in life nothing is taken to its ultimate conclusion, life is a half-way house, a place of obligatory compromise; and, in dealing in logical conclusions, a man steps out of life..."⁸ René Harding, as far as his intellectual life is concerned, is in the business of stepping outside of life to deal in logical conclusions. In this way his ideas are the very opposite of sentimental - "Any idea," Lewis comments in Paleface, "should be regarded as 'sentimental' that is not taken to its ultimate conclusion."⁹ It might also be argued that René is in very good company, since the finest thinkers, inventors and artists have excelled in their talent for the logical conclusion, and so given us a bit of light where all was animal action and the polar north before. René's conclusions are the same sort of

conclusions that are presented by Dostoevsky in the figures of Ivan Karamazov or the man of the Underground - insights that have, in many ways, enriched the human race and added to the small store of enlightenment. But it could also be said that René's logical conclusions begin the events that lead to his downfall. His conception of history is what prompts him to resign his Professorship and move to Canada where he endures his "great curse of exile,"¹⁰ and what ultimately plays its own part in his wife's suicide.

René's conception of history, to which a whole chapter, entitled "Rotter," is devoted in the novel, is important, showing as it does the intellectual cast of his mind, as well as mirroring an attitude that appears to be gaining more and more support. René's historical ideas grate against the more popular attitudes of the times, as they are essentially tragic, anti-progressive and anti-humanistic. He is for a new way of looking -- Rotter, in his article, says:

Our author does not suggest...that all history should be abolished, only that it should be approached in a different way with radically changed accents. The story of ideas, theory of the state, evolution of law, scientific discoveries, literature, art, philosophy, the theatre and so on, these are the proper subjects of history. Contemporary with these creative happenings are the proceedings of the uncreative mass, climaxed by the outrageous blackguardism of hereditary or elective government. The wars, civil massacres which should be treated as police court news, provide the basis for the story of mankind we encounter in history books.¹¹

Rotter goes on to comment that Professor Harding (echoing his creator, Lewis) suggests that into every generation are born a creative few, and it is they who are responsible for all the progress that does occur. But these gifted men are always outside: they have no power, no

public support and play very little part in the life they are transforming. This has always been the case - up to the present. Now, suggests René, "a novel situation is developing. The inventive and creative few are growing restless at the continued depravity of the traditional rulers on the popular plane, and the childish melodrama which they persist in perpetuating."¹² With regard to this changing attitude, Rotter cites examples from René's book which may be even more relevant today than they were in the fifties, when Self Condemned was written:

The student masses have begun to regard the world into which they have been born with a cold eye, in a way that has never happened before. They are not all very intelligent, but they come to this situation with a new mind. They are beginning to look upon the proceedings of their masters as if they were looking down upon a plane of things beneath them....Among publicists, scholars, academic leaders, a similar disgust with the pitch of nonsense to which we have attained, and the persistent criminality of the politicians, is another helpful sign.¹³

René is giving his own articulation to an attitude and a hope that has run through this century. Le Corbusier, in his book When the Cathedrals were White, places his faith in an about-face, just as René does:

Eyes that see, persons with knowledge, they must be allowed to construct the new world. When the first white cathedrals of the new world are standing, it will be seen and known that they are something true, that something has really begun. With what enthusiasm, what fervor, what relief, the about-face will be made!¹⁴

René's hopes for a new orientation or an about-face do not go so far as to envisage a world ruled by a 'superman' or a world having the look of a Platonic republic. Rotter says of René: "All he desires is to see the upper plane substituted for the under plane: the only kind

of superman he would like to see installed is the superior man already there, the creative minority."¹⁵ As to how the new history should be written, to speed the transformation, "...what Professor Harding suggests is...a description of two races of men, one destructive and the other creative. The destructive always wins in the end:...so that, at last, things are a hundred times as bad as they were to start with, instead of a hundred times as good."¹⁶

As Rotter suggests, this new orientation offered by René differs absolutely from the history we have been used to. There is something of the mythic about it, the concept of fate is reintroduced into our mental equipment, and tragedy and comedy are released from their artistic imprisonment to become once more a part of life:

To conclude, history can only be written as a tragedy, because all that is worth writing about that has come down to us has been denied its full development, has been nipped in the bud, or has been done to death.¹⁷

This is an echo of T. E. Hulme, who feels that the tragic attitude to life is the only right attitude:

It is the closing of all the roads, this realisation of the tragic significance of life, which makes it legitimate to call all other attitudes shallow. Such a realisation has formed the basis of all the great religions, and is most conveniently remembered by the symbol of the wheel. This symbol of the futility of existence is absolutely lost to the modern world, nor can it be recovered without great difficulty.¹⁸

Because of what history has taught him, and because of the state of the world, René has a great distrust, amounting almost to horror, of stopping with the animal or the polar bear: it is simply that which has got us into this bleak situation, he would say. The world rushing into the second global war appals and depresses him, as he is convinced that

nothing good can come of the war; it only means a further running down, a further cheapening and devitalizing of civilization. And the world is putting itself in this situation through the antics "of these troupes of power-drunk individuals who play the old game in new ways, but always to the same disastrous end."¹⁹ René is sure that there will be no place for people such as himself in a very short time. Upon a visit to Rotter's study he is again reminded of what is fated for men like himself and his friend:

Both of them knew that this was the last year of an epoch, and that such men as themselves would never exist on earth again, unless there were, after thousands of millennia, a return to the same point in a cosmic cycle. They knew that as far as that quiet, intelligent, unmolested elect life was concerned, they were both condemned to death; that the chronological future was, in fact, a future life, about which they both felt very dubious. They might survive as phantoms in a future England; or they might learn to live in some other way.²⁰

"They were both condemned to death" -- René feels that he is about to be murdered, and all men like him: the blame for all this, he would say, can be laid at the feet of "power-drunk individuals" and homo stultus. But everyone will go down in the apocalypse, the destructive and the creative alike. René is fond of thinking of hotels and apartment buildings as containing enough human types to represent a microcosm of the world, and he feels that civilization and its microcosms both ultimately return to the animal from whence they came:

Professor Harding's comment was that the House that Jack Built was always built in the same way. And its destiny was in accordance with its architecture. Some houses built by Jack attracted incendiaries, some did not. But it did not matter whether they did or whether they did not. All in the end had wild cats in their cellars, for civilization never continued long enough to keep the wild cats out. -- if you call it civilization, René Harding would shout.²¹

René's distrust of the animal, of the cat or the bear or the monkey which is so obsessed with being itself that it can be regarded as mad, began in those mental regions which are "outside of life" and deal in logical conclusions. But in the working of things René has no way of keeping his distrust of the animal where it belongs; it intrudes itself into his life, which is at least half animal, since his mind is attached, for better or worse, to a body. René is very much the animal in some ways, although quite uncomfortable with his body, or with anything in life which reminds him of the wild cats or mad bear. The body is too mechanical, too thoughtless, too insane, or too absurd. Thinking of the mechanics and the animality of birth - as well as what it leads to - he comes to the conclusion that it would be better if it did not happen at all:

...he recognized that his mother had behaved with absurdity in conspiring with Mr. Harding to beget him, in an embrace that is not objectively edifying and is accompanied by pants and grunts and expressions of ridiculous and unmerited approval of the dull solicitor whose name he bore. Dignified as she was in the antechamber of death, lying exhausted by life in that chair to which she seemed glued, in that, her present form, his mother had little connection with the young French woman who passed almost half her life in a bed with Mr. Harding, for the sole purpose of bringing into life René and his three sisters. All the values were wrong in that bed. Neither of the excited couple considered what they were doing or they would have quitted the bed immediately.²²

This revulsion (rooted in the intellect) for the animal shapes René's attitude toward his wife, as well as toward his mother and most of his family. When asking himself why he lives with Hester he puts it down to sex, simply, and reflects that "nothing would have induced him to live with a man of Essie's disposition and mediocre intellect."²³ René is split: his thinking self very much abhors the animal, while his

animal self is energetic and healthy. When at one point he determines to settle an argument with Hester by converting her, via the amorous, "from an indignant icicle into a mass of melting flesh," he finds to his chagrin that "A similar transformation occurred in the masterful analystEros was a factor he always left out of his calculations and...he was traversed with what almost amounted to a shudder. The absurd was happening. He was unable to escape from the absurd; that absurd which was for him an analogous enormity to l'infâme."²⁴ René's niece, Pauline, has no doubt about what her uncle is - he is a bear; he even makes a bear-noise:

'My bear-uncle! My old bear-uncle, where have you been? What have you been doing with yourself? Oh, make your bear-noise, René darling!' And René, lifting his bearded face in the air, gave his ho-ho-ho laugh, and she echoed delightedly, in a higher register, his famous ho-ho-ho.²⁵

Connected with the brutish mechanical life of the animal is stupidity, as far as René is concerned. The animal is not only insane, it is stupid as well: madness and ignorance imply one another, since a creature which cannot stand outside itself is probably not going to see much or know much as a consequence. And according to René it is not only the moronic men-at-the-top who are stupid - those who have had the power to make of history a continuing blood story; the majority of men are stupid as well, including his own family. When he is obliged to explain to his family just why he has abandoned his post to travel to Canada, their reactions and questions cause him to gnash his teeth a little; he reflects: "It was human stupidity he was reacting against. Yet now he was obliged to justify himself to a number of persons

typically stupid."²⁶ Nor is Hester exempt: immediately upon the opening of the novel we learn that she, too, is stupid as well as childish:

Allergic to learning, as are many children, for her the teacher was a life-long enemy. As she had stared, wide-eyed and with her mind a wilful blank, at her mistress as a child, her eyes hung open like a gaping mouth; and the fact that her husband was a professional teacher, a trained imparter of knowledge, caused Essie all the more readily to drop back into the mulish trance of childhood; expertly unreceptive she stripped her large defiant eyes of all intelligence, and left them there staring at his face, while her moist red lips were parted as she slowly raised a fresh spoonful of sugared porridge.²⁷

René's attitude toward his nature clearly involves him in the absurd. There is something of the irrational and ludicrous in his situation. On the one hand René is very much the animal and delights in it, but on the other hand the sterner side of his nature repudiates that sporting ground, and for its own good reasons. Perhaps precisely because of this split, René is extremely uncomfortable in the presence of the absurd, as well as in the presence of the animal. He is painfully and acutely conscious of what he calls the absurd: "There was nothing he dreaded so much as the absurd, in himself, a part of his French idiosyncratic legacy, exaggerated if anything in the course of its grafting to a British stock."²⁸ The very building he lives in is for him absurd. We are told that "...this building, so replete with absurdity, produced in him a malaise, which he endeavoured to conceal, although he would say to Essie 'Is it not unusually absurd? Or is it just the average human mean? What do you think?'"²⁹

In an absurd world where the carefully constructed walls of the intellect are constantly attacked by the animal being that gives the intellect an excuse for existing in the first place, the most apt image that comes to Rene's mind is that of the zoo:

René in his cab began to circle around the slumbering Zoo animals, the lions, the elephants, the anthropoid apes, all dreaming of Africa, Siberia and Malaya, Bengal and the Polar Sea. What was in fact their dream-life was in the cages and pools, on the imitation rocks, and in the miniature Savannahs of the Zoological Gardens. But their real life of course was where lions live under the blazing suns, or where the Polar bear prowls upon the ice-caps. They step back, when they close their eyes in sleep, into the reality, out of the squalid nightmare of Regent's Park. Oh, where was his real life! ...He began to think that, after all, his lecture-room might be his habitat, as the river-side was the water-rat's, and the prairie was the buffalo's.³⁰

The world is a zoo when René considers the problem of the animal: a zoo replete with cages in the form of Houses that Jack Built, Hotels, Rooms, Ships, Universities and Cities. The animal is always present, and there is a great deal of animal imagery to be found in the novel. Mrs. Harradson is "a small bird-like figure with a white crest, which bobbed backwards and forwards, and an irascible eye."³¹ René sometimes "thought of himself as an animal,"³² his brother-in-law Percy Lamport is a "phenomenally smart, forever quietly-amused yak,"³³ but Victor Painter, another brother-in-law, is a "gutter-rat."³⁴ Hester is at one time "a mermaid,"³⁵ at another "a sickly dog with big sentimental eyes, dumbly thanking one for a good turn one has done him,"³⁶ and after her death René thinks of her once as the "'little rabbit.'"³⁷ As well, René and Hester encounter in Canada cockroaches in the hotel, bedbugs in the furniture; squirrels, pigeons, and sparrows cluster outside their window asking for handouts. Hester at one point

is badly bitten by myriads of Canadian black flies, which results for her in a long illness. The Hotel Blundell, where René and Hester spend their first years in Canada, is animal-run, it could be said. This "microcosm," as René calls it, is kept functioning by people who are quite happy to stop with the polar bear, although they are quite a harmless lot, most of them. The janitors, who are responsible for the mechanical workings of the hotel, are most prized for their drunkenness since "the hotel had no use for an honest, hardworking, and sober janitor. He would be out of tune with the hotel, and the janitor is a very important functionary in such a place."³⁸ Mrs. McAffie, with her near genius for the comic and the absurd, "actually preferred a man to be a thief and a drunkard."³⁹ In Charlie, one of her favorite janitors, "she saw the ruined Peer Gynt, but still a wild piratic lunatic. She loved his screaming laugh, his staring hyper-eager eyes."⁴⁰ But if Affie is "patroness of rotten janitors," she is also "cheerfully and openly on the side of copulation...she cried in her heart with King Lear 'let copulation thrive!'"⁴¹ Consequently she is much more inclined to rent the rooms of the hotel to people who wished to use them "for acts of discreet prostitution than for less Babylonish purposes."⁴²

René comments at one point that "...when one shuts oneself up in a little segment of the world like this hotel, it is brought home to one what a violent place the world is,"⁴³ and certainly, not all the persons inhabiting the Hotel Blundell are as purely comic as are the figures of Affie and Charlie. Animal does not mean animal spirits merely, it appears, in the romantic, rollicking or fantastic sense. The sinister

side is well represented in the microcosm of the Hotel. The behaviour of the janitor who succeeds Charlie, "...was infinitely bad from the first day of his arrival, when he nearly killed a man in the Beverage Room."⁴⁴ Bill Murdock, as well as nearly killing a man the day he arrives, nearly kills a woman before he leaves, and to his antics is added a daily entertainment provided by a woman the Hardings have named "The Scream" - "it being the husband's nightly habit to half murder her."⁴⁵ As the crowning touch to this troupe of characters, who are "quite typical," René says, is Mr. Martin, the most sinister of all although, ironically, the one who seems to be the most genteel and civilized. It is he who, by burning down the hotel, causes the death of several guests, and it is he who murders Affie. So René cannot escape his own conception of history; it is worked out in small in the Hotel Blundell. That final conflagration, which wreaks the same damage, in microcosmic or caricatural terms, that war does, leaves a grotesque and ghostly reminder of what has occurred:

What René and Hester gazed into was nothing to do with what had been the Hotel Blundell. It was now an enormous cave, full of mighty icicles as much as thirty feet long, and as thick as a tree, suspended from the skeleton of a roof. Below, one looked down into an icy labyrinth: here and there vistas leading the eye on to other caverns: and tunnels ending in mirrors, it seemed.⁴⁶

A Polar Bear might live here, it could be conjectured - it might, for certainly nothing else could. The remains of the Hotel are as dead and alien to any sort of civilization as René predicted the world would be after the war. So the animal, or the supremacy of the animal, leads to death, it seems, and like the proverbial snake consumes itself in its

passions. René thinks of the fire in terms of the war that is at the moment raging in the European world:

As we lived in our apartment, in our wonderful crapulous Room, we were kept away from chaos and dissolution by its strong walls and orderly shapes. But it can all be set a match to, and daemonic nature appear from nowhere and eat it up. Then he thought of war. War is so respectable. The rulers, the firebugs, dare not do more than kill a few million people. Theirs is a hypocritical destruction, it takes them years to go round bumping off small packets at a time. How much better it would be if they summoned a few million people to the Sahara and destroyed them all within twenty-four hours by poison gas or some quicker exterminator. But no; they must pretend. They must say that it is a very holy cause that they are serving, and fool around for four or five or six years. Fire is not frivolous and hypocritical, it is not human.⁴⁷

The image used by Lewis for these matters appears to be cyclical - from ice to ice; from the regions inhabited by the mad obsessed polar bear back again to ice and cold, as the microcosm, and indeed the macrocosm, goes up in flames. It is the ice and cold that eventually claim René too, as he gives up all pretence to vital life and comes to inhabit his dead and wintry shell.

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAGON: THE NEW MONSTERS

The novel Self Condemned works on at least two intersecting and opposed planes, both of which are implied in its title. On the one hand, a case may be made to support the view that René condemns himself, that from start to finish he has only himself to thank for his eventual empty life or living death. His self willed, or even wilful, resignation of his Professorship, his hasty move to a country that he knows will provide him with no mental or social stimulus of the sort he needs in order to exist in a civilized manner, his refusal to seriously entertain Hester's pleas and despair until it is too late - all this is evidence to show that it was his own fault. But this is a case-book or clinical approach in that it assumes that a man has a great deal of control over his own destiny, and assumes further that people in the heat of action, or of living, are actually capable of standing outside themselves to foresee coolly and rationally the consequences of their actions. Against this view or track of thinking, Lewis has placed an element of what might be called the inevitable or the tragic. There is always the suspicion that René's fate is inevitable, that however much he reasons and rationalizes or frantically digs out for himself mental and physical spaces of one sort or another, it is all just so much noise and activity; that he is, and always was, a puppet of forces quite outside his control. René himself is not blind to the supernatural forces at

work in the world. When taking leave of his sister Helen before he embarks for Canada he gives her a warning, and some advice:

...a dragon has made its appearance in this century. It is not a reptilian animal about fifty yards long which spits fire. It is a far bigger animal than that, and a far more subtle one. It is, if you like, a mental animal: one may identify it, almost see its fiery being in the minds of men. I have seen it, I have felt it. For a long time now I have known of its existence. I know why it is here, I am afraid of it. I recommend you very earnestly not to interfere with it, pretend you do not see it, and if you do so, you have nothing to fear from it. Sidestep if you can its tumults, its earthquakes, its thunderbolts.... We are little, powerless, shortlived creatures. What I am speaking about is supernatural, of vast powers, and ageless. We cannot possibly know why, at certain periods, these monstrous things appear among us and then disappear again. Only, it is the best and only advice. Mind your own business....But stop. For you there is an alternative: you can ride this monster. You have one of its scales quite handy. Why not become it?¹

It is René's adhesion to the way of the intellect which has caused him to be split from his body, his family and his world, but it is that also which has allowed him to apprehend the dragon, which, he says, cannot be battled, but must be sidestepped. René's way of the intellect, or way of life, has other consequences, as well, some of them more personal, affecting apprehension and perception itself. His acute awareness of the animal, the absurd, the monstrous dragon, and the ill fate befalling civilization give him a feeling that it is all quite unreal:

So he picked his way among people who could not see: dealing in this way with the blind produced in him sometimes the sensation of being an Invisible Man; at others, of being brutally concrete in an unsubstantial universe. During this period he began to acquire a consciousness of his physical presence which was extremely disagreeable. He thought of himself as an animal among delicate and vapourish humans. Even his hairiness embarrassed him. At times his acute self-consciousness would take the form of feeling that he was on view, an exhibit.²

This is an abnormal state of mind, it might be said; it is schizophrenic: but it is also a condition or mental soil out of which

grows one of the oldest philosophic questions - that of the real.

When René asks himself despairingly: "What was the rational, after all?

Where was one to look for the norm?"³ - he is not displaying a streak of insanity - quite the opposite - and yet it is pursuit of such questions which leads him to feel that he is an "Invisible Man," or "brutally concrete." And eventually, it seems, dogged pursuit of the rational does produce in him a condition close to insanity.

René feels that he has become a "ghost," "converted by some witchcraft" until he has become a "degraded self,"⁴ and feels that matters are out of his hands, that "the future was starkly outlined, for him, as if by some supernatural hand."⁵ But it is not only himself he feels is in the grip of a supernatural hand, or that he experiences as a ghost of one sort or another. René imagines some people as animals, as has been shown, but to some others he reacts as if he is in the presence of the supernatural. Of his three brothers-in-law he sees one as a yak, the second as a rat, and the third, Kerridge, as a "wicked giant":

The longer René stopped at the Kerridges, the more powerful the illusion grew that Robert Kerridge was a supernatural imposter, that he was, not in fancy, but in cold reality, a 'Wicked Giant': happily he never stopped more than a few days. Had his stay extended into as many weeks, the sensation would have become intolerable. It is quite likely as the time to go grew near, he would have killed Kerridge. As it was, on this second day, he was still in a playful region, the atmosphere of fairyland not yet so thick as to madden him. There was still an even chance that this was merely a clergy-man after all.⁶

Dr. Lincoln Abbot, whom René meets on the boat to Canada, "he regarded as, in part, a phantom,"⁷ Mr. Starr is a "fairy-man"⁸ whose human "Marvels [all] crumbled into dust...in spite of the intense genteelness of the conjurer,"⁹ and René himself, for a time, writes

"fairy stories in French for a Montreal Magazine."¹⁰ Cedric Furber is a spook, but by the time he is part of René's life, René is more comfortable than he had once been in the presence of the ghostly. When Hester objects to Furber's unreality, René rejoins with "'You are such a stickler for the real. I prefer these fantastic shadows on the walls of the cave.'"¹¹

During the shock following Hester's suicide, René experiences the ghostly again, this time in the form of visits from his dead wife. René is hospitalized, and when he is finally allowed visitors "The first to enter the room without knocking was, it was natural, Hester. And when the nurse found him sobbing upon the pillow, every effort was made to get rid of this terrible and disturbing visitant."¹² But Hester keeps returning and soon is not a "dreadful visitant," but a welcome one, and one that can be conversed with:

The Hester he saw at present was a living and moving one, one that he had loved, a witty, at times malicious one; but one who had become as much part of his physical being as if they had been born twins, physically fused - or better, one might say, for physical amalgamation would be unpleasant, identical twins....She still, in death, spoke of England. But all he spoke to her about was forgiveness. Could he ever be forgiven? No, forgiveness was of course impossible. Once or twice he thought he must get back to England, and if he should ask her forgiveness there, then the sweet face would smile as if to say, 'You have returned! We could not both return! But you have found your way back. That proves that there really was love in you for me.'¹³

During René's stay at The College of the Sacred Heart, Hester eventually merges with God:

When he had said to himself that everyone in this College was engaged in a communion (namely, with God) as he was with Hester, that would only be true ideally. It was only the Saints who communed with God as he did with Hester. Naturally, it would be most improbable that

any of these teaching priests or seminarians enjoyed any intense and obsessional communion with God similar to his own with his dead wife: the idea of God certainly ruled their lives, but He would hardly be more than an abstraction.¹⁴

Hester is exorcised, by rational magic, as René returns to the normal, but he still has one more encounter with the supernatural. He has by this time become a "shell," and when his friend McKenzie makes the mistake of asking him about his book he responds violently:

'Stop!' René panted in the *bass-de profundis* - an involuntary command. He dropped back upon the sofa where he had been sitting, as if dropped by somebody who just now had violently snatched him up, as if a supernatural being had whipped him up into the standing position, forced his terror-struck 'Stop!' out of him: and now had dropped him back on to the sofa with a gravitational thud.

McKenzie was a sober man, not prone to feyness, but he experienced the presence of the supernatural. He seemed to intuit that poor René had been dropped back - that some power (and he felt an evil power) was responsible for the behaviour of the body of his friend, which had become an automaton. And he responded to the word 'Stop!' as he would to the command of a god. His tongue froze to his palate, he sat stock-still.¹⁵

Unreality, dragons, ghosts and the supernatural: these are only some of the indications that René's world, or the world itself, is out of joint. During the years the Hardings spend in "The Room" in the Hotel Blundell, they pass their days and months in suffocating idleness, with virtually nothing to stimulate life. In such an atmosphere René, for whom consciousness is everything, feels that he might sink into a living oblivion, that he might become the logical conclusion of, or go one step beyond, Eliot's "Hollow Men":

All freedom depended upon consciousness: but now, at times, he felt his brain clouding and blurring. His daily periods of semi-consciousness increased. It was as dreaminess that he thought of the semi-conscious spells, and indeed that was often what they were. More and more the 'waking hours' were rather patches of semi-consciousness than a continuous wakefulness or full awareness. Then one day he would not wake up at all,

he told himself. He would just get out of bed at the usual time, and his life, on a far more primitive level, that of the functional coma of the animal world, would go on as the polar bear does, or the ant. So a great experiment would have come to an end.¹⁶

Such an existence, very close to the "functional coma of the animal," is very close to the natural (since nothing could be more natural than the animal, which is basic), and farthest away from the artificial, but it is also very close to death. Everything, therefore, is changed for the people caught in such an existence. Even the normal apprehension of time no longer operates in René's world:

In the Rip van Winkle existence of René and Hester - of suspended existence so that they might as well have been asleep - a thousand years is the same as one tick of the clock. It was a dense, interminable, painful vibration, this great whirring, agelong, thunderous Tick. Bloat therefore the minutes into years, express its months as geological periods, in order to arrive at the correct chronology of this too-long-lived-in unit of space, this one dully aching throb of time.¹⁷

The world of dragons, ghosts, dreaminess and grave time is the world thrown up by the imagination, it could be said: this is what the imagination says the world is like, and it has nothing to do with what the rational faculties say the world is like, since the rational eye does not apprehend men as animals or phantoms, or does not "express its months as geological periods." It appears that in René's world, as is often the case, these two world views cannot live comfortably with each other; they are profoundly incompatible, and neither can one be destroyed to allow the complete supremacy of the other. Consequently, in order to live at all, a split must be fashioned between the two, and it is the imagination which must be driven underground, to live suspended and alone. In René's case, this split or detachment of everyday life from the life of the spirit is well developed and rigid:

In order not to be at the mercy of his emotions, he had been obliged to effect a division of his personality into two parts: he had created a kind of artificial 'unconscious' of his own, and thus locked away all acuity of realization....His callous self was so well insulated from the compartment of the imagination that he was able to pass as a somewhat unemotional man.¹⁸

It is not surprising that René gets to the point where he actually feels very little emotion, forced as he is into such an unnatural split. Speaking to his sister Helen, he says, "' I believe I am right in saying that I show no signs of any emotional disturbance. What is more, to be quite accurate, I feel no emotion, except when I deliberately turn my mind that way.'" ¹⁹ Like a machine, then, he can turn himself off, or on, and it is a kind of human automaton that he is rapidly becoming.

Although René displays no emotional disturbance when he takes leave of his sister, by the time he has begun to adjust to his situation in Canada there is the first direct mention in the novel of his impending insanity. When René suggests to Hester that they could do worse than stop in Momaco since "one would not find, I expect, in every city...a Mr. Furber," they are both shocked at this utterance:

Hester stared, or it would be truer to say glared at him as though he had just displayed an unmistakable streak of insanity. And in some way she was right. Even more than herself René was shocked; and something did find its way into his manner of thinking which was insane.²⁰

In his private thoughts, René returns to their awful renewal of life in Canada. It is true that life for them seems to be returning after their years of entombment without work or congenial friends - but this new life, René feels, is a grotesque caricature of the real, a kind of ghost in itself:

He knew that he could never return to London, now or when the war ended. That point settled, Momaco was his best bet, not only in Canada, but in the world. This thought would have been terrifying to a less truly stoical man: as it was he knew that it was Momaco or nothing, and he began to know this hysterically, fanatically, almost insanelly. For he knew quite well that it was a fearful thing to know.²¹

But René pushes such thoughts aside and plunges into his new life with energy and will -- it is, from his point of view, the only thing to do. And the split between what is fearful to know and what logically has to be done establishes itself more rigidly than ever, so that it, in its turn, causes another split, between René and Hester. René is, by his stoicism and insistence upon the rational, killing himself. And when Hester actually does kill herself, the morgue scene is imbued with images of death, both physical and mental:

René was not conscious of passing through the door, but almost immediately he found himself leaning bodily upon the policeman, his head almost on the shoulder of his escort, and looking down upon a much-soiled collection of objects. They were arranged in the most paradoxical way. Like a graffito the essential were picked out. He recognized the low-bottomed silhouette of a female figure, the clothes shapeless and black with blood. Slightly to one side there was a pair of legs in horrible detachment, like a pair of legs for a doll on a factory table, before they have been stuck on to the body. At the top, was the long forward-straining, as it were yearning neck. Topmost was the blood-stained head of Hester, lying on its side. The poor hair was full of mud, which flattened it upon the skull. Her eye protruded: it was strange it should still have the strength to go peering on in the darkness.²²

René's Esse -- his essence, as it were -- has been grotesquely fragmented by death. She has gone from being obsessed and simply an animal, to being fragmented, and so of course dead. She is in this sense a dead comment upon René's own dead and split nature: she is "a much soiled collection of objects," and then, "an exhibit." A graffito, whatever else it implies, brings to mind the penciled hand, furiously, or carefully,

scribbling; it is the mark of the man who understands the pen. And it is as a pen-man that René has often approached Hester, reading her through the rational eye of his historical book-learning; he has dealt with her before, that is, as a graffito. But in the morgue René goes to seize her, reacting out of shock:

René took a step forward towards the exhibit, but he fell headlong, striking his forehead upon the edge of the marble slab - the remains being arranged upon something like a fish-monger's display slab. As he fell it had been his object to seize the head and carry it away with him. To examine his legal right had been his last clear act of consciousness.²³

The language Lewis uses in this passage points to death, both the sudden death of Hester, and the long-drawn-out death suffered by René. It is his head or intellect that has been partly responsible for leading René into this mortuary, and as he falls, thinking to seize Hester's head, he falls headlong, striking his forehead. It is his head he injures so badly upon the marble slab, and that marble slab is as cold, as hard, and as anti-life (in the vital and animal sense) as the workings of René's intellect have been. And René, in a sense, dies with his Esse, as he experiences "his last clear act of consciousness" in the morgue.

When René arrives in Canada it is "as a dead man,"²⁴ but, true to his name, he is re-born, even if it is to a life "mechanized upon a lower level."²⁵ With the suicide of his wife that second life is shattered, but René, or the shell of René, survives. This survival, it appears, is accomplished in the old way, via the rational and the tyranny of the rational over all else. In order to pull himself again out of

death he resorts to the intellectual habit or logic game, but at this point it is a caricature of what it once had been; it is almost insanity itself. Reasoning with himself about Hester in order to rid himself of her ghost, he thinks:

Was any pity due from him to this mutilated corpse? How pitiable almost any corpse is! But this was an aggressive corpse - it was death militant. This dead body was there with a purpose. It was designed to upset his applecart, violently to interfere with his life. It was a Japanese-like suicide, a form of vengeance....He decided that Hester dead was even less worthy of respect than Hester alive. Nor did he fail to review the sheer volume of sentimentality attracted by death. On all sides he found himself beset by false sentiment. He congratulated himself upon the good work he had done in reducing in his personal life these mounds of slush to reasonable proportions. Towards the end of this period he felt he had cleansed things to such an extent that he could end this particular activity. He had driven Hester out of his mind, in which she had dangerously intruded. So all that was overcome, and he could now once more proceed on his way.²⁶

What René has suffered is an extinction of the personality. He has transformed himself, and been transformed, into a "shell":

If the personality is emptied of mother-love, emptied of wife-love, emptied of the illusions upon which sex-in-society depends, and finally emptied of the illusions upon which the will to create depends, then the personality becomes a shell. In René's case that daring and defiant act, the resignation of his professorship in 1939, had made imperative the acquisition of something massive to counter-balance the loss, else disequilibrium could not but ensue. But, reacting with bitterness to criticism, he began hurling overboard the conventional ballast, mother-love going first.²⁷

This shell condition, then, seems to be one of the possible fates in store for the man outside or the man, like René Harding or Ivan Karamazov, who allows the intellect to run as wild as the animal it is reacting against, until the mind, in its turn, becomes like an animal and its possessor a kind of animal of the intellect. René's final condition is an insanity of logic. The state of his mind might be summed by a passage from Kafka's Resolutions:

So perhaps the best resource is to meet everything passively, to make yourself an inert mass, and, if you feel that you are being carried away, not to let yourself be lured into taking a single unnecessary step, to stare at others with the eyes of an animal, to feel no compunction, in short, with your own hand to throttle down whatever ghostly life remains in you, that is, to enlarge the final peace of the graveyard and let nothing survive save that.²⁸

But Lewis is not involving his reader in a moral here; there is a twist of the knife as he throws René Harding, at the end of the novel, back into the world. The last two chapters of Self-Condemed are entitled "Return to the Normal" and "The Cemetery of Shells" - apparently to function 'normally' is to inhabit a cemetery of shells, or to be gutted of all that life which would cause thought, ghosts and dragons. When René has "...locked himself up twice as tight as he had been locked up before,"²⁹ he has all the appearances of being a perfectly normal man; no one, probably, would ever charge him with insanity or anything like it. Very shortly he accepts a post in the United States, and so returns to his normal habitat, the University; he returns to the normal run of men, as well as to the normal state of mind:

...and in a few months he was installed in a small, warm, wooden dwelling not far from the campus of this much more pretentious seat of learning, five hundred miles farther south; and the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing.³⁰

CHAPTER V

THE DISLOCATION OF SPACE

Just as a man's life and his ideas play upon and modify each other to become, in a sense, one fabric, and just as people shape, transform and direct the fate of one another, so it seems that physical spaces - of houses, buildings, rooms and countries - are not separate entities either. In Self Condemned Lewis presents this conception with the image of Chinese boxes:

René, as they settled down, willy-nilly, in this shell, began soon to develop a consciousness of solidarity with the environment. The Hotel in which they lived was surrounded by the District, which was surrounded by the rest of the City, which was surrounded by the Province, which was surrounded by the Nation, which was part of the Continent. The North American continent, like the Chinese toy of box within box within box. And these boxes were all of a piece, all cut out of the same stuff. They were part of the same organism, this new North American organism. Their cells would have the same response to a given stimulus. And of these diminishing compartments the ROOM was the ultimate one, which they inhabited. It was an American ROOM.¹

Not only the American Room, but all René's spaces appear "part of the same organism," so that a stimulus in one place produces a reaction in another. At the beginning of the novel the world is breaking up, as if split by a great explosion, and so René's world is breaking up too -- all his spaces are gone. As the war, and all that goes with it, breaks up European civilization piece by piece, the life once enjoyed by the man of learning comes to an end. As René enters Rotter's study he muses that "This was 1939, the last year, or as good as, in which such a life as this one was to be lived. Parkinson was the last of a

species. Here he was in a large room, which was a private, a functional library. Such a literary workshop belonged to the ages of individualism."² And as René goes on to list in his mind the number of cheaply available goods that have, in the past, made a life such as Rotter's possible, he comes to the conclusion that: "The Individualist Age, composed of a multiplicity of small paradises, is no more."³

It was in his own study, acting as an Individualist, that René shaped his ideas of History, and those ideas or insights cancelled for him another and much larger space. The University, as well as the library and study, breaks up for René: they are no more, in any real sense, or they become no-thing, or no space, just as René later will become nothing, partly as a consequence of this break-up of his spaces. Even René's home is gone for him since The Houses that Jack Built "All in the end had wild cats in their cellars..."⁴

So René, fleeing from a toppling and wild cat Europe, casts himself outside, like Dostoevsky's man of the underground, and it is a cold world he can expect to inhabit, since all worlds are cold to the alien, cut off as he is from home, work and family. Canada, as it is experienced by René, becomes a spatial metaphor for the man outside:

Icicles six feet long, and as thick as a man's arm, hung from the eaves and gutters. The heat of the hot-water pipes could some days scarcely be felt. Yet they knew that in fact they were giving forth a heat comparable to that of a Central American jungle. Below zero temperatures started when the cold came down from Hudson's Bay and higher, and the Polar Sea walked right through the walls of the hotel as if it had been a radio wave and went clean through your bones. At 50 below zero, in a place by no means perfectly dry, like Momaco, with a sizable running through the middle of it, it was as impossible to keep out as radium,

in the imperfectly-heated apartment of the Blundell. It walked through your heart, it dissolved your kidney, it flashed down your marrow and made an icicle of your coccyx.⁵

As ice takes the place of the Hotel Blundell, when it burns down, so it appears that ice and icicles will take the place of European civilization, when it burns down. But before fire destroys the hotel there is still, for René and Hester, the Room. Their space has shrunk from considerable proportions - both physical and mental - to this one Room. René asks himself if this space is enough to support life:

How much land does a man require? The landowner Count Tolstoi asked that....His answer was six feet by two, the space demanded by a man's body when he is dead. -- Alive twenty-five feet by twelve is all right, with the dusty trough of half a dozen backyards thrown in, and a dusty company of maples - in which pursuing their beautiful lives robins and jays, starlings and doves abound: not to mention the eternal passerine chorus, or the small black Canadian squirrel who vaults on to the windowsill.⁶

The Room has the form of a grave, if not the dimensions - what it contains is the living dead, and apparently twenty-five feet by twelve is quite enough space. Like Dostoevsky's underground man, René is pushed into a cupboard, but unlike his miserable predecessor, he is not alone. René shares the Room with his wife, but just as he splits his animal and intellectual natures, so in the room he splits himself from Esse. Creating privacy, he places between himself and Esse that symbol of escape, the suitcase:

It was René's habit to place an upended suitcase upon a high chair and drape it with a blanket. He stood this between his wife and himself, so blotting her out while he wrote or read. He could still see, over the crest of this stockade, a movement of soft ash-gold English hair, among which moved sometimes a scratching crimson fingernail. This minimum of privacy, this substitute for a booklined study, was all he had for three years and three months - to date it from the sailing of the Empress of Labrador from Southampton.⁷

The hotel Room becomes for the Hardings "a museum of misery,"⁸ and a "lethal chamber."⁹ But it also becomes for them themselves, as they become one with their Room, which they very seldom leave, and where they converse with themselves for three years:

And the Room: that became something else. For anyone from the outside to come into that, was like someone walking into one's mind - if one's mind had been a room and could be entered through a door and sat down in. René found he disliked their Room being entered by other people. The less people had come into it, until practically nobody came - the more they suffered in it boxed up there in interminable lonely idleness - the more he felt that if he must see people he preferred to see them upon neutral ground. That they should see where he and his wife had been so unspeakably miserable he looked upon as an affront. If he had lost his reason he would probably have burnt down the hotel, so that no one should ever come in and boast, 'This is where we shut up that dumbbell René Harding.'¹⁰

This pseudo-coffin, like all cupboards inhabited by the men outside, is not really a coffin, since a great deal of life goes on inside it (it is, curiously enough, Stavrogin, the man of the world, who has little life in him). It is here, however "unspeakably miserable" the Room may have made them, that the Hardings find some happiness with each other, and share their "vows of hardship."¹¹ It is during his Hotel Blundell days that René is closest to the animal he is so distrustful of - he is without thought, without work and without the world - and yet it is here that he and Hester are the happiest. It appears a case of the world well lost for a cupboard, or a room, since the world is crashing down about their heads, or breaking up under their feet.

But that Room, good and bad as it is - both a place of exile and a place of peace - burns down too, with the rest of the Hotel. The fire that consumes the Room and the Hotel Blundell seems a metaphor for the

extinction of the space which for a hundred years has been occupied by the heirs of Dostoevsky's underground man. Since Notes from the Underground, the outsider has sat in his room, or his cupboard, or his underground hole and fretted about the coming apocalypse. It seems seldom to have occurred to him that universal destruction would deprive him of his last home, too. Self Condemned, in this sense, marks the end of the outsider. Logically, at this point there is nothing for a man in his position to do but to die or to re-enter the world. For René, the fire marks the end of the Room days and the beginning of a more normal existence, although Hester becomes more and more upset about this new life of theirs:

So the passionate solidarity of the two lonely exiles practically confined to 'the Room' in the Hotel Blundell had begun to crumble. The destruction of their prison had resulted in their coming out of their seclusion into a more normal existence. Mamaco began to relent. But Hester retained the spirit of the disregarded intruder in a most jealously exclusive society: and, as she saw it, René had in fact broken away, and, in however qualified a manner, gone over to the side of the enemy -- he had made his peace with Momaco.¹²

The two homes that René and Hester find for themselves after the fire -- first a room in the Hotel Laurenty, and then a more ostentatious flat elsewhere -- are given scant attention in the novel. At first sight this appears curious since nearly all spaces that René inhabits are carefully dealt with by Lewis: a reader of the novel is well acquainted with the Hotel room, the Hotel itself, the House that Jack built, Rotter's study, Furber's study, the Hospital Room, the College of the Sacred Heart and McKenzie's house. But the rooms that René and Hester live in after the fire are not there -- and perhaps are important for that very

reason: they are meaningless, practically, like shadows that emphasize their new shadow life in Momaco. René had thought that he had no space, or no place, after he left London, but the Room in the Hotel Blundell appears as a complete and vital world compared to the spaces he inhabits afterwards, which are conspicuous only by their absence.

The next room that René inhabits is a logical conclusion to the meaningless or empty rooms he lived in after the fire. It is a white hospital room in "The Silent Ward...a place so quiet that, to be any more silent, it would have to be death."¹³ This is the place of "the White Silence."¹⁴ Everything - the room, the silence, the nurses and internes - is a white reminder of the snow that the Hardings watched outside their hotel window, and of the vast, silent regions inhabited by the eternal polar bear. René, too, is part of this whiteness and silence:

René's brain was silent too. All that entered it resembling a thought was a painful feeling that he was alone, that he had been removed from life and shut into a white solitude. The white interne was a mechanism. He could not understand the nurses. They had not learned how to speak....the mind began to dream of white rivers which led nowhere, which developed laterally, until they ended in a limitless white expanse. The constant sense of loneliness ended, in the white silence, as a necessary ingredient of the white silence, which was all that was desired - the negation of the visual; and an aural blank which had more quality than white, was not such a negation, and was as soothing as a caress. But at last consciousness ebbed quietly away, and René lay in a dreamless sleep, alone in this place dedicated to silence, totally removed from life.¹⁵

From a "place dedicated to silence, totally removed from life," René goes to another place removed from life, The College of the Sacred Heart. René "...regarded Sacred Heart College as a magical hospital,

an ancient place of healing; what was taught there, a mystical psychiatry."¹⁶ Many persons in this century, distracted and wearied by the extinction or metamorphosis of all spaces - educational institutions, family institutions, civilization itself - have looked with hopeful eyes to the seemingly static Church, as a possible and still vital space for men to inhabit. René himself "...was profoundly thankful that so extraordinary an institution as the Catholic Church was still there intact, exultantly human. What other institution - which was an institution - lived as the guardian of the great human values of antiquity?"¹⁷

But for René and - following the metaphor - perhaps for a great many intellectuals of the twentieth-century, the peace provided by the Church proves at last to be an annoyance, as his still restless mind frets in the shackles of laws and settled conditions:

The peace of the scene, the restful monotony of the lives of these people, whose minds reflected the massively built Summa of all philosophies (providing a static finality in which the restless intellect might find repose), had proved in the end nothing but an irritant to René. His intelligence was too dynamic, his reason was too bitterly bruised, for a static bliss.¹⁸

For René then, it is the "Cemetery of Shells" that is his final home. And, reading the novel metaphorically, it appears that it is from this cemetery that our "new world" will have to arise, if in fact it arises at all.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISLOCATION OF LANGUAGE:

THE DEATH OF LOGICAL MAN

In Understanding Media Marshall McLuhan writes:

The achievements of the Western world, it is obvious, are testimony to the tremendous values of literacy. But many people are also disposed to object that we have purchased our structure of specialist technology and values at too high a price....Perhaps there are better approaches along quite different lines; for example, consciousness is regarded as the mark of a rational being, yet there is nothing lineal or sequential about the total field of awareness that exists in any moment of consciousness. Consciousness is not a verbal process. Yet during all our centuries of phonetic literacy we have favored the chain of inference as the mark of logic and reason. Chinese writing, in contrast, invests each ideogram with a total intuition of being and reason that allows only a small role to visual sequence as a mark of mental effort and organization. In Western literate society it is still plausible and acceptable to say that something "follows" from something, as if there were some cause at work that makes such a sequence.¹

Like much contemporary literature, Self Condemned is, in one of its aspects, a novel about language. T. S. Eliot maintained, of the writer: "...our concern was speech, and speech impelled us/ To purify the dialect of the tribe...."² But it appears that it is not simply purification that the writer is grappling with now, but complete revolution or transformation of the language, as Western man tends to think more and more in a mythical fashion and less and less logically. Of this transformation McLuhan says: "We live mythically but continue to think fragmentarily and on single planes."³ The transformation - almost a mythic transformation, it could be said, like the ancient magic

that turned a man into a stone, or a tree, or a god - is no doubt responsible for the present intense concern with language and communication: with media, lack of communication, generation gaps, language barriers, etc.

Self Condemned could be considered, on one level, an account of the (anguished) death of Western logical man, and as such marks the end of Western civilization as it has been known for centuries. The novel is written in sequential fashion, the main character (who is never out of the picture) thinks in sequential fashion, and all Rene's problems, in one sense, spring from his particular and very Western bias toward language. At the beginning of the novel René finds himself without a post because of what might be termed his public language problem. His conception or language of history does not agree with the traditional conception - he is speaking a different language, and so communication with his superiors and peers is difficult, if not at times impossible. And, whether the traditionalist view of history is logical or not, René's view certainly is, and on the strength of that view he resigns. Similarly, it is logical conclusions that René resorts to in his battle with Hester over whether they should or should not return to England. It would be lunatic and irrational to return, he maintains. They would have to put up with much worse conditions than they live under in Momaco. In Momaco he has even been offered a teaching post:

'Of course,' he said. 'Would you like me to turn it down? Should I turn it down and in a year or so return to England, and see if I can secure a post as History Master in Mill Hill School, or take on the

marking of examination-papers? Such jobs are frightfully well-paid. I think we might manage to rent a top floor in Pimlico. You would have to do the washing. We could not afford a laundry. But we should get by somehow. - Would it be better if I did that?'⁴

René's languages, languages of the logical conclusion, jangle in the presence of other people's languages, which, whether or not they are logical, are different from his. René and Hester are both "obsessed"⁵ like the polar bear that is obsessed with being a polar bear, and, true to that, each of them growls his own growl, or barks his own bark, oblivious to one another in a meaningless symphony of noise. For it is noise that would result from a situation, or a world, in which everyone spoke his own language, and the noises emitted by the rational man would be just as absurd as any other. This condition of babbling, or Babel, this jungle assault upon the ear may have something to do with René's apprehension of the world as animal. And indeed, when he and his wife are living in the Room, and closest to the animal, they receive most of their information through the ear - via the telephone, the radio, and the gossip of the Hotel staff.

René's language of logic, which he applies in a blanket manner to everything, appears to spring from the assumption that man's basic animal nature is responsible for most of his troubles. That man is rooted in the animal, that he is close relative of the bear, cat and monkey, is so old an idea it has practically become an absolute part of our thinking. And it is an easy and logical step from that assumption to begin distinguishing between those who are less animal and more animal - or again, logically, between those who are less sane and more

sane, depending upon who is, or is not, detached from himself. This is a linear or sequential way of reasoning. It is along these lines that René reasons in order to come to his conclusions about History, and it is this same form of reasoning that has given man a great deal of his knowledge. But it involves a split, as Professor McLuhan has pointed out in the passage quoted above; a split, that is, between logic and reality. In the novel, Hester is aware of this split, and in argument with René over the question of London or Momaco once says, "'These class-room arguments get one nowhere,'... 'It may be a good piece of logic, but it has no connection with the reality. London was where we were born. I might agree with you if I had been born in Momaco - though I should know it was a pretty poor place to be born in (if I had any intelligence).'"⁶ By consistently cutting himself off from the reality, then, René reaches a point where all is quite unreal, where his world is a shadowy phantom-infested world.

One of the paradoxes of human thinking appears to be that in order to deal at all with reality, which appears as irrational, absurd and chaotic, one has to deal with it in a logical and rational manner. Twentieth-century man is very interested in the absurd and the irrational, for example, but all that he has said about these matters has been rational and non-absurd - that is, the best analytical things that have been said about these matters. René found himself absurdly sacrificed upon the altar of the rational, but any thinking about René's problem must be rational and logical. It might logically be maintained that since René's religion of logic has brought him to death, then he must

have been wrong; then man should not cut himself off from his animal roots, but should remain with the animal and forget about stopping sane altogether. But that line, it seems, is the one Hester followed -- and it led to a different, but just as insane and eventually suicidal situation.

Conjectures such as these lead to what might be termed 'an explosion of language' -- for novels such as Self Condemned seem to make it no longer feasible to think in rigid categories of 'sane' and 'insane,' or 'real' and 'unreal.' The animal could be insane, since it is so obsessed with being an animal, but René's schizophrenia could equally be regarded as insane, although the animal and René are apparently at opposite poles of development. But, by the same logic both might be called sane -- it is healthy and good to be an animal, to loose contact with those roots results in an alienated condition, and therefore it is the sane man who stops with the animal. Or, one may argue as René does, just as soundly, and talk of stopping sane. It seems clear that, looking at the matter in this way, it is no longer possible to say just who or what is sane and who or what is not: the terms, sanity and insanity, have been exploded, and can no longer be used in a glib or categorical manner. The same is true of the rational and the irrational, or the real and the unreal: by exploding these terms Lewis has disarmed them, but without, however, putting anything in their place. That, too, is as it should be, for following Lewis's own conception of satire, it is not the artist's function to impose any new system -- not even, it seems, any new system of language. As to

that exploded language - if a person cannot be one thing or another, either an advocate or an enemy of the animal, or cannot think in one rigid category or another, then he might be, and think, both. As early as 1915 Lewis points out in Blast that a person must now function as a duality, if he is to function at all:

, You must talk with two tongues, if you do not wish to cause confusion.

.....

 You must give the impression of two persuaders, standing each on different hip - left hip, right hip - with four eyes vacillating concentrically at different angles upon the object chosen for subjugation.

 There is nothing so impressive as the number TWO.

 You must be a duet in everything.

 For, the Individual, the single object, and the isolated, is, you will admit, an absurdity.

.....

 You can establish yourself either as a Machine of two similar fraternal surfaces overlapping.

 Or, more sentimentally, you may postulate the relation of object and its shadow for your two selves.

.....

 You must catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions: not settle down and snooze on an acquired, easily possessed and mastered, satisfying shape.⁷

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

¹McLuhan, Understanding Media, 175.

²Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 16.

³Ibid., 14.

⁴Hulme, Speculations, 71.

⁵McLuhan, Understanding Media, 178.

⁶Laing, The Divided Self, 23.

Chapter One

¹Lewis, Rude Assignment, 59.

²Ibid., 62.

³Ibid., 63-64.

⁴Lewis, Men without Art, 262.

⁵Ibid., 263.

⁶Ibid., 263.

⁷Ibid., 106.

⁸Ibid., 108.

⁹Ibid., 109.

¹⁰Eliot, "The Hollow Men," Collected Poems 1909-1935, 89-90.

¹¹Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 422.

¹²Lewis, Men without Art, 112.

¹³Ibid., 113.

- ¹⁴Ibid., 116.
- ¹⁵Ibid., 116.
- ¹⁶Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 511.
- ¹⁷Lewis, Men without Art, 121.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 118.
- ¹⁹Ibid., 121.
- ²⁰Ibid., 225.
- ²¹Lewis, The Demon of Progress in the Arts, 97.
- ²²Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 8.
- ²³Lewis, Men without Art, 204.

Chapter Two

- ¹Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 5.
- ²Lewis, The Doom of Youth, vii.
- ³Lewis, Rude Assignment, 146.
- ⁴Ibid., 144.
- ⁵Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground, 181.
- ⁶Ibid., 181.
- ⁷Ibid., 205.
- ⁸Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 251.
- ⁹Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground, 183.
- ¹⁰Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, 3.
- ¹¹Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 87.
- ¹²I did not include Stavrogin in the list of suicides since his particular rejection of life seems to have occurred before the action of The Possessed begins. In this way The Possessed is an examination of the life of a man after he has elected to become a "shell," to use Lewis's term for René Harding.

- ¹³Lewis, Paleface, 156.
- ¹⁴Lewis, Men Without Art, 153.
- ¹⁵Lewis, Paleface, 196.
- ¹⁶Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 431-432.

Chapter Three

- ¹Eliot, "The Hollow Men," Collected Poems 1909-1935, 90.
- ²Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 166.
- ³Lewis, "Studies in the Art of Laughter," 509.
- ⁴Hulme, Speculations, 123.
- ⁵Lewis, Self Condemned, 211-212.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, 81.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, 138.
- ⁸*Ibid.*, 96.
- ⁹Lewis, Paleface, 248.
- ¹⁰Lewis, Self Condemned, 171.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, 83.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, 84.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, 84.
- ¹⁴Le Corbusier, When the Cathedrals were White, 5.
- ¹⁵Lewis, Self Condemned, 85.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, 88.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 89.
- ¹⁸Hulme, Speculations, 34.
- ¹⁹Lewis, Self Condemned, 86.

- ²⁰Ibid., 78
²¹Ibid., 14.
²²Ibid., 30.
²³Ibid., 31.
²⁴Ibid., 44.
²⁵Ibid., 47.
²⁶Ibid., 28.
²⁷Ibid., 3-4.
²⁸Ibid., 29.
²⁹Ibid., 11.
³⁰Ibid., 28.
³¹Ibid., 5.
³²Ibid., 29.
³³Ibid., 45.
³⁴Ibid., 69.
³⁵Ibid., 43.
³⁶Ibid., 349.
³⁷Ibid., 394.
³⁸Ibid., 263.
³⁹Ibid., 264.
⁴⁰Ibid., 265.
⁴¹Ibid., 205.
⁴²Ibid., 205.
⁴³Ibid., 231.

⁴⁴Ibid., 273.

⁴⁵Ibid., 230.

⁴⁶Ibid., 296.

⁴⁷Ibid., 291.

Chapter Four

¹Lewis, Self Condemned, 133-134.

²Ibid., 29.

³Ibid., 29.

⁴Ibid., 161.

⁵Ibid., 163.

⁶Ibid., 124.

⁷Ibid., 164.

⁸Ibid., 214.

⁹Ibid., 221.

¹⁰Ibid., 257.

¹¹Ibid., 256.

¹²Ibid., 373.

¹³Ibid., 376.

¹⁴Ibid., 387-388.

¹⁵Ibid., 404.

¹⁶Ibid., 211.

¹⁷Ibid., 170.

¹⁸Ibid., 140.

¹⁹Ibid., 139.

- ²⁰Ibid., 304.
²¹Ibid., 310.
²²Ibid., 371.
²³Ibid., 371.
²⁴Ibid., 359.
²⁵Ibid., 356.
²⁶Ibid., 395.
²⁷Ibid., 400.
²⁸Kafka, "Resolutions," The Penal Colony, 29.
²⁹Lewis, Self Condemned, 406.
³⁰Ibid., 407.

Chapter Five

- ¹Lewis, Self Condemned, 189.
²Ibid., 76.
³Ibid., 77.
⁴Ibid., 14.
⁵Ibid., 185.
⁶Ibid., 179.
⁷Ibid., 169.
⁸Ibid., 171.
⁹Ibid., 174.
¹⁰Ibid., 178.
¹¹Ibid., The title of Chapter XVII is "Vows of Hardship," 236-246.

¹²Ibid., 310.

¹³Ibid., 372.

¹⁴Ibid., 372.

¹⁵Ibid., 372-373.

¹⁶Ibid., 380.

¹⁷Ibid., 380.

¹⁸Ibid., 380.

Chapter Six

¹McLuhan, Understanding Media, 84-85.

²Eliot, "Little Gidding," Four Quartets, 54.

³McLuhan, Understanding Media, 25.

⁴Lewis, Self Condemned, 360.

⁵Ibid., 311.

⁶Ibid., 340.

⁷Lewis, Blast, 91.

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